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film survey

SPRING 1947

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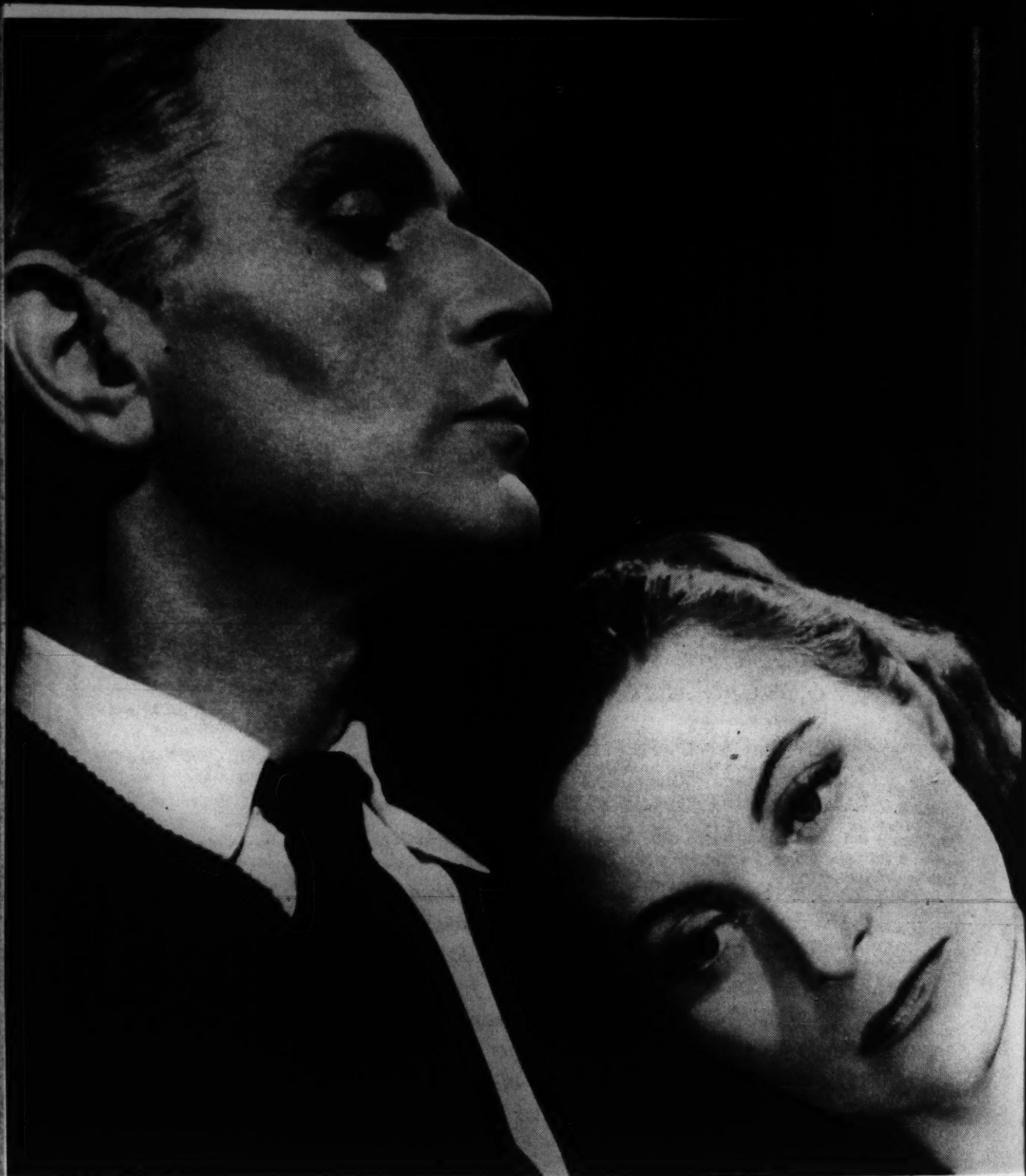
EDITED BY **Peter Noble**

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Cover : JOHN MILLS, one of the finest young actors in films today, has recently had a great success as Pip in David Lean's magnificent film "Great Expectations." Born in Suffolk, February 22nd, 1908, Mills made his first appearance on the screen in "Britannia of Billingsgate" fourteen years ago. Since then he has appeared with distinction in a number of British films, including "For Ever England," "Tudor Rose," "Goodbye Mr. Chips," "The Young Mr. Pitt," "In Which We Serve," "This Happy Breed" and "We Dive At Dawn." His three best performances were given in the latter films, and also in "Waterloo Road" and "Great Expectations." Soon he will be seen in "So Well Remembered" and "The October Man." He has acted with the Old Vic ; his best work on the stage has been in "Of Mice and Men," and in his wife's (Mary Hayley Bell) plays, "Men In Shadow" and "Duet For Two Hands," both of which he co-produced. Soon he plans to co-direct and appear in a film written by his wife. John Mills is one of the strongest bastions of the British cinema. Long may he remain in our studios.

NOTE.—Prospective contributors to "Film Quarterly" publications should send M.S.S. to the editorial offices, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope.



"LA SYMPHONIE PASTORALE"

PIERRE BLANCHAR, as the pastor who falls in love with a blind girl, played by **MICHELE MORGAN**, in Jean Dellanoy's excellent film, recently seen at the Curzon. "La Symphonie Pastorale" is one of the first post-Occupation films to be shown in Britain. Notable for the lyricism of its photography, the enchanting background of eternal snow, and the performance of Mlle. Morgan (which won the Award at the Cannes Film Festival last year for the finest performance by an actress in all the films submitted by seventeen nationalities), this is a notable French film of great beauty.

New Cinema

by oswell blakeston

THERE is no doubt that the film of today is in peril of becoming something of a formula. The studio technicians are becoming perfectionists—of the formula. Think of the time which is wasted on retakes, just because the camera, at a certain moment, has not centered the action. How very imperfect the perfectionism that allows no line ever to be muffed !

A great many professional film men are frightened of the perfection obsession, of the formula, and they are as eager as the public to greet something new. As soon as it arrives, with a successful bang, they want to be among the first to follow the lead. But I fear they look for "newness" in the wrong places. They are ever expecting to be saved by technical innovations and tricks instead of—by a development of the screen way of telling a story.

The story of *montage* is a typical story. Eisenstein confessed to me, after his success with *Potemkin*, that *montage* was "making the best of a bad job." Eisenstein was unable, while on location, to get scenes he had scripted, so he jumbled up the bits he had got and trusted to the scramble. It was wonderfully effective the first time. The second time—it was just a repeat. For *montage* (in the special Eisenstein sense) is not a new way of telling the screen story, but a particular way of making the best of one bad job. All such tricks of mechanical technique are bound to be limited by the mechanism. Once they've been explored—you've had it. It's only the non-mechanical technique which can lead on, without end, and no amens. But who can get any plus out of "Russian" *montage* to-day? After the dazzle, one can take it and think—of its limitations. Snip snip from one signpost (peasant with upraised arm) to another.

If you don't believe that, if you've been lucky enough to dodge the later-day efforts to be "new" with *montage* by the documentary boys, consider the end of a man who thought he could find "new cinema" with a mechanical formula—consider *Ivan (truly) The Terrible*. What could be more dated? For Eisenstein didn't even give us a chance to make a trick reaction, to say, "That was clever! how did he do it?" He plugged away. The *whole* coronation sequence taken with a low camera, when the low angle might have pointed the first burst of chanting—the roof, the flowing song, the . . . er . . . infinite. But I don't want to talk about *Ivan* in this way, I don't want to think about that wretched film ever any more, except to record it as the logical conclusion of doctrinaire *montage*. Didn't you feel that if Eisenstein had fallen down dead in the middle of the production any of his assistants could have finished the film to pattern? For that is the fate of mechanical tricks, which try to break the formula, they themselves are bound to end up as formulas.

Or think of the fuss that was made about the "newness" of *Citizen Kane*. We all know now this was not the lead we wanted, and many of

us knew it when the film was first presented. We didn't have to wait for the infantile psychology of *The Stranger* to know that Orson Welles was wasting his talent. Those of us who knew our early cinema, who had seen the Ufa silents which Karl Freund directed, had marvelled at Orson Welles' camera set-ups about twenty years before he used them. The number of trick angles is limited by the machine: trick angles are bound to be a dead end, when they are used for their own sake. Orson Welles did not employ them as part of the story telling, but as a method of camouflaging it. A simple tracking shot would have been more effective than the angle fanfare of the opening sequence because it could have told more clearly the story of the barbed wire and the house with a dying man.

Again, quite recently, the question of something new in cinema became *A Matter of Life and Death*. But this picture, once more, made old hands think of the past—of the carriages which ran round without wheels in the early comics, the invisible men, the trips to the moon. The miraculous is nothing "new" in cinema and no aid to the real development of the art of telling a story in pictures. If anything can happen in a story, there isn't tension. Let the hero get in a tough spot, he can vanish into another dimension. So what? The miraculous is too easy: the difficult things are the simple, fundamental things.

So the "imaginative" *A Matter of Life and Death* was not "new" and was sadly lacking in imagination. That old corn of the story—the tears on the rose. And surely that moving-staircase-to-heaven business is so much the first thing that comes to mind that even men, who are pleased with being tricky, might have suspected it.

What I'm trying to say, what I keep on trying to say is that the day of mechanical tricks in films is over. If *A Matter of Life and Death* had tried to give us a new development in the screen story... Well the film is, and always be, a story telling art. That is why we can look forward with confidence to the future of the film. Story telling is always an essential community demand. The job for the progressive director is to find better ways of telling stories. To rely on mechanical tricks for "newness" is a proof of the failure of imagination, although mechanical tricks can be used to help. But tricks belong to the technician and the art of story telling in pictures to the artist.

Take the films of Billy Wilder. *Double Indemnity* might look, to the casual observer, an effortless film compared to the showy nonsense of *A Matter of Life and Death*. But the Billy Wilder picture gives—psychological conviction. We feel these people would inevitably be caught in this destiny. This sense of the inevitable—the thing which makes the picture seem to play itself—can only be achieved by genuine imagination. This is the hard thing to achieve, the thing worth achieving.

The director of tomorrow, the man whose lead they will all want to follow, will show his genius in some development of the film story. He will probably employ pretty much the same devices and apparatus, but he will turn everything upside down with—a new psychological revelation. Let directors, therefore, put all their imagination, all

their energy, into the way of story telling. The technique, the mechanical side, must be part of the psychology of the story. It must seem inevitable, it must do its work so well that it must "disappear" on the screen. The spectator must accept it as part of Fate. It must not obtrude as a trick.

We are left, then, with the key word—psychology. If we are not to look for "new cinema" in tricks, where are we to look for it? In psychology. In a deepening of the business of psychological conviction. The action of the story must grow from the psychology of the characters, and the psychology must be more mature. Take the marvellous scene in *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers* when the woman rushes, with a burning brand, at the man who is trying to blackmail her. The intention is to kill, and the death-struggle ends in passionate love-making. This is a beginning, this is something new for the screen, this is nature in a way that the moving staircase of Michael Powell is not.

Newness cannot lie securely in machines, which must always be limited, but in people. Eyes, ears, nose, mouth—they are the same features for every face; but no two faces are alike. And no two souls are alike. Ingredients may be the same; but combinations (the integration of ingredients in personality) may always be new.

Novelists have shown the way; for there are better, more mature new novels being written each year—think of Elizabeth Lake's *Spanish Portrait* and Henry Green's *Loving*. Great contemporary novelists know that combinations can always be new, more complex, more richly integrated. They know how to use their imagination to achieve newness; and they have to work with the knowledge that more good books already stand written than good films have been dreamt of.

So—we should rejoice that the film is a story telling medium. It means that it will always have a future. For it can always find newness in the one place where it may be found—in characters and their behaviour. It can—if film directors will learn the lesson, and not waste their talent in tricks.

READY SHORTLY

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Plan for 1947

by Michael Balcon

Producer of *San Demetrio*, *London*, *The Captive Heart*, *The Overlanders*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Hue and Cry* and others.

STUDY the past, if you would divine the future," is a Confucius saying, which I think can safely sum up the idea at the back of my mind when planning future productions. Though it is equally true that, as Theodora Campian once wrote, the present interests me more than the past, and the future more than the present, it is essential for a film producer to think over his past failures and successes to determine future policy.

The Editor of *FILM SURVEY* has asked me, as production head of Ealing Studios, to write something about our future productions, and to say why scheduled subjects are chosen.

It is always necessary, of course, for a company to plan well ahead, and it is because one has to look so far into the future that so many films which are announced fail to materialise. What may today promise to be a very good subject indeed may, through some change of circumstances, prove to be anything but suitable by the time it could go into production.

And the past acts as a pointer towards the type of production which one should study for the future. For some time our own films have been developing a pattern which has gradually taken shape and which we intend to follow.

This pattern is, I think, familiar to most followers of British films by this time—the realistic style of what one might term the documentary technique as applied to entertainment. This sometimes means fact interwoven with fiction, such as a factual background with fictional characters. Or it may mean an honest transcription to the screen of some actual happening.

This is not an iron-bound rule, of course. *Nicholas Nickleby* scarcely comes under that heading. But looking back on the past few years there is no doubt that so far as our own productions at Ealing have been concerned, this realism has provided us with our greatest successes, as, for instance, *The Captive Heart* and *The Overlanders*.

It was said of filmgoers in the pre-war days that they wanted to escape from reality, and those of us who tried to raise the level of screen entertainments were assured that we were aiming above the average filmgoer's head. Several producers, myself included, went ahead and had the satisfaction of seeing our beliefs justified. Public taste has improved, and is improving. Such improvement is possible only if the quality of film improves.

There is often a tendency for people to confuse intelligent films with highbrow productions intended for a relatively limited audience. A



Photo : Ealing

DOUGLAS BARR, ALASTAIR SIM and HARRY FOWLER examine a clue in "*Hue and Cry*," directed by Charles Crichton and produced by Michael Balcon, 1947.

commercial studio has obviously got to cater for the widest possible market, and these filmgoers, when all is said and done, do go to the cinema primarily in search of entertainment.

What happens before a decision is taken to produce a particular subject? The final decision, of course, rests on the production head ; but however sure he might be of his own judgement, it would not always be a wise thing for him to go ahead without the support of those who are working with him.

A story idea is submitted. It may come from an actor, a director, an associate producer, a writer, an agent—in fact, there are literally hundreds of different sources. Though it is the hardest thing in the world to find a good story, no film producer suffers from lack of suggestions !

The idea for *The Captive Heart*, for instance, came from my own wife, who was associated with the British Red Cross during the war years. The idea for *The Overlanders* came from the Australian Federal Food Office when Harry Watt was there, searching for a subject. When a story is submitted it first goes through the hands of the literary editor and a reader, whose comments are noted. If the production head likes the idea, he has to find an associate producer who is equally enthusiastic and also a director. Generally speaking, the contract producer and directors who are most likely to be the right men for the particular story are asked for their opinions. Complete lack of interest on the part of all of them is an obvious indication that the subject is lacking in

appeal ; but when you get both an associate producer and a director who share enthusiasm for a story, then you have a combination which spells a great deal of promise for the production.

So when a subject is announced for future production, it means that it has already overcome several hurdles and that it is backed by an experienced body of opinion which believes in it.

The programme we at Ealing have set ourselves for the next year or so follows, to a very large extent, the trend of the past two or three years. That is to say, we intend to make films which have for their background some factual subject, either historical or dealing with some current problem.

Some months ago, I saw a play at the Westminster Theatre which stirred my interest considerably. It was *Frieda*, written by a young dramatist named Ronald Millar, and dealing with a subject which is likely to remain topical for some time to come—that of fraternisation between British and Germans. It seemed to me that here was a fascinating and provocative screen subject, and at the time of writing this article, *Frieda* is in production at Ealing, with Basil Dearden directing, and a cast headed by David Farrar, Glynis Johns, Albert Lieven, Flora Robson and Mai Zetterling. It tells the very human story of a British airman who marries the German girl who helped him to escape from a prisoner-of-war camp. It shows how a group of typical English people react to the presence of a former enemy in their midst.

In *It Always Rains On Sunday*, next production to be made at Ealing, we have an entirely different subject, but once again the study of a community and the reactions of that community to certain unexpected events.

This time, it is a typical, crowded East End community. The even tenor is suddenly disturbed on one grey, Sunday by the appearance of a former local boy who has escaped from prison and is seeking shelter among the people he once knew. Robert Hamer is to direct this story, which was written by A. J. La Bern. The colourful, full life of the East End is his material, and the pictures will carry a kaleidoscopic impression of East End life on a Sunday, with its street markets, open-air boxing ring, clubs, pin-table saloons, and the many and varied characters who go towards the making of that life.

Charles Crichton, who has just completed a light-hearted piece of thrilling fantasy, *Hue and Cry*, will have a very different subject to handle with his next picture, *Against the Wind*. This is a factual story with fictional characters, of Britain's hush-hush army of saboteurs which was responsible for harrassing the Germans in occupied territories after Dunkirk. J. Elder Wills, who is working on the story, was himself in this special service, and we aim at a film which will give a really authentic picture of this small but courageous army, showing its training and, in particular, the planning and carrying out of an operation in Belgium. There is no need for any artificial sensationalism to make this subject vivid and exciting. This is one of those cases in which truth is stranger than fiction, and although the story itself is fictitious, the incidents are based on facts, and the characters are prototypes.



Photo : Ealing

JILL BALCON, DEREK BOND, SALLY ANN HOWES and SIR CEDRIC HARDWICKE in the film of Dickens' novel "Nicholas Nickleby," directed by Cavalcanti and produced by Michael Balcon, 1947.

Rather the reverse will be the case with *Saraband For Dead Lovers*, which will follow. This is based on the novel of the same title by Helen Simpson, who fictionalised the dramatic and tragic story of Sophie Dorothea, consort of George I, whose scandalous intrigue with Koenigsmark was the cause of her divorce. Although the book takes the form of fiction, historical accuracy is strictly observed and all the characters are accurately drawn. This will be one of our most spectacular 1947 productions, to be directed by Basil Dearden.

Factual, too, will be *Scott of the Antarctic*, which will be directed by Charles Frend, who has just completed *The Loves of Joanna Godden* for us. This is, of course, to be based on the epic expedition to the North Pole of Captain Scott, and we already have a camera unit at work in the Antarctic filming background scenes. The unit is headed by Osmond Borradaile, who photographed *The Overlanders*, and he will be away for three or four months. Actual production of the film will not begin, however, until next winter. Before that, we hope to make a film of Victor Hugo's classic novel, *Toilers of the Sea*, which Cavalcanti will direct.

Two Negro Actors

(1) ROBERT ADAMS

ROBERT ADAMS is now one of the leading Negro actors in the world. Just over ten years ago, he arrived in England from the West Indies with exactly sixpence-halfpenny in his pocket ; since then he has been labourer, wrestler, private tutor, singer and actor. He bears many resemblances to Paul Robeson, with whom he has often acted on the stage and in films—he is over six feet tall, is an athlete, a singer and a lawyer. Like Robeson, he came into the theatre because it was one of the few professions in which a Negro could reach the top. For Adams, however, it has been a long, hard and difficult journey ; but today he is a star in British films and stands at the top of his profession, a position he deserves after ten years of struggle.

Born of humble parents in Georgetown, British Guiana, forty years ago, Bob showed a remarkable aptitude for learning, and obtained scholarships quickly to high school and college, finally becoming a teacher at a Georgetown school. In between teaching he organized school shows, producing and acting in amateur plays, and also giving a number of concerts, for he possessed a fine tenor voice and a good stage presence. He had long wanted to act professionally, but realised that there was very little opportunity to do so in the West Indies, where few theatrical activities flourished. For most West Indians, Britain is the Mother-Country, and eventually Bob's eye turned eastwards towards London. He made up his mind to visit Europe, and finally, in 1934, he decide to try his luck in England, spending all his savings to book his passage to Plymouth.

Adams arrived here one night, a young giant of a man, full of ambition, eager to get to London and to work in the theatre. He had to borrow his fare from Southampton to Waterloo, but when he got to the capital he found that things were more difficult than he had imagined. The stage was not open to inexperienced Colonials, and parts for coloured people in the London theatre were few and far between. Months flew past, months of odd jobs as a labourer, and finally the Negro was persuaded by a sport promoter to become a professional wrestler. His splendid physique and background of athletics served him well and for more than a year Robert Adams was a well-known name in European wrestling circles. When he had become Heavyweight Champion of the British Empire, however, Bob decided that it was time to try to establish himself on the stage. He had achieved some sort of independence through wrestling, and could afford to spend some time in trying to crash the film world. At last he started as a small-part player, his first film job being a very minor role in the Alexander Korda production

Sanders of the River, which starred Paul Robeson and Nina Mae McKinney. Following this, Bob managed to get other and better parts, principally in such films as *Midshipman Easy*, and *Song of Freedom* and *King Solomon's Mines* (in both of which he acted with Paul Robeson). In *Song of Freedom* he had a comic role as Zinga's friend, Monty, and was extremely amusing, the part contrasting vividly with that of the villainous Negro chieftan which he played in the Rider Haggard film. Adams is a versatile actor, as these two widely-different performances demonstrate.

He made his London stage debut in André van Gyseghem's production of *Stevedore*, by George Sklar and Paul Peters at the Embassy Theatre. Since then he has been seen on the stage in such plays as *You Can't Take It With You*, *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, *Chastity My Brother*, *Colony* (in which he played the leading role, a West Indian strike-leader), *The House of Jeffreys*, *Three Little Foxes*, *The Judgement of Dr. Johnson*, *The Petrified Forest*, *Cellar*, *Caviare To The General*, and others. More recently, Adams formed the London Negro Repertory Theatre, a group of actors organised to perform plays giving Negroes worth while roles and presenting racial problems on the stage. At London's leading political playhouse, Unity Theatre, Adams was seen in 1946 as the tragic Jim in Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* with members of his group. Later he plans to extend the work of his Negro theatre and may soon take it on a tour of the U.S.A. and the British Empire under the auspices of the British Council.

In the English cinema, Robert Adams has become prominent very recently. He has been seen in good roles in *Old Bones of the River*, the M.O.I. feature *An African in London*, and also in *It Happened One Sunday*, *Dreaming*, and *Caesar and Cleopatra*. But it is in the Two Cities film, *Men of Two Worlds*, directed by Thorold Dickinson, that Adams receives his most important screen role to date. He is featured in the film with Eric Portman and Phyllis Calvert, and is equal to them in both billing and story importance. For this, Adams had to play part of an African composer and pianist; in six months he learned to play the piano sufficiently well for the role, and is now a more than adequate pianist). This is just another indication of Bob's amazing thirst for knowledge and experience, and his capacity for hard work. In between studying his stage and screen parts, he writes plays, articles, prepares lectures and studies law and music; he recently passed his first law examination. His book on the West Indies, "Caribbean Hurricane," will be published shortly. He has written several plays and his screen story about Haiti may be made into a British film some time next year.

For his performance as Kisenga, in *Men of Two Worlds*, Adams received much favourable comment from the British critics. A.E. Wilson in *The Star* said: "Robert Adams, with his stalwart figure, his pleasant personality and his resonant voice, is particularly striking as Kisenga." Dilys Powell in *The Sunday Times* wrote: "There is a moving piece of acting by Robert Adams," while Joan Lester in *Reynolds News* remarked on the "fine voice and dignity which he brought to the screen."

Adams is an unusually intelligent and sensitive person, who feels very strongly on questions relating to the colour problem both on the stage and the screen. He hopes to present his viewpoint on the stage with his Negro Theatre, and considers that only through obtaining important parts can coloured actors influence the trend in films and theatre. "If," he says, "all my screen parts were, for example, as dignified, human and moving as my role in *Men of Two Worlds*, then one might soon be able to influence cinemagoers in the right direction. And if they see Negroes playing cultured, intelligent people often enough, they will begin to realise that the coloured man is not necessarily a superstitious, hymn-singing buffon."

Adams stated recently, in a conversation with the editor: "The most powerful of all vehicles of education has been, and still is, the screen. Much has been written of this by way of criticism and I will not add a great deal except to remark upon some of the ways in which we have made progress. The white man shows his ghettos and his Cockneys and his slums on the screen, but he counter-balances this with a positive and constructive picture of his people, so that white audiences can rejoice at the progress at the same time as they contemplate the shortcomings. But the portrayal of the Negro has always concentrated on the latter—the shoe-shine boy, Pullman porter, semi-idiot *a la* Stepin Fetchit, hallelujah-shouters as in *Green Pastures*, the rolling-eyed funny man like 'Rochester,' the black Mammy with the cap and apron and the fat smile, the half-naked savage as in *Sanders of the River* and many others of that genre."

"Hollywood has much to answer for, but British studios have had the courage to make a step forward. In *Midshipman Easy*, *Song of Freedom*, *The Proud Valley*, and a few others, Negroes were not exactly jungle types. And now further progress has been made in *Men of Two Worlds*, the first picture in the history of the screen where a Negro has a real starring opportunity in company with white actors. Some light is indeed breaking into what was formerly unrelieved darkness, and the courage that urged the making of *Men of Two Worlds* is the courage that is breaking down the barriers of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of my people. Out of the suffering of the last war, people have learned to have a measure of understanding; and we wish earnestly that this spirit of co-operation and helpfulness will persist. The result will be a real cementing of the bonds of empire and a confirmation of the Christian message—love one another.

(2) ORLANDO MARTINS

IN 1946, for his magnificent work as the witch doctor, Magole, in Thorold Dickinson's *Men of Two Worlds*, Orlando Martins received great praise from the Press. He has thus come into prominence after twenty years of professional acting, for he has had a long and interesting career, beginning with an appearance with the Diaghileff Ballet in London early in the 1920's. His part in *Men of Two Worlds* is his most important to date, and is the culmination of many years of hard and constant work. Born in Lagos, West Africa, 1900,



Photo : Two Cities

ROBERT ADAMS as the Europeanised Kisenga and **ORLANDO MARTINS** as the witch-doctor Magole in "Men of Two Worlds," directed by Thorold Dickinson, 1946.

Orlando took his school certificate and went to work as a clerk for a French firm. He has very vivid recollections of the First World War ; his grandmother became a prisoner of war when the Germans held the Cameroons, and it was her suffering at German hands that caused Martins to give up his job in Africa and come to London, with the object of joining up in the British Navy. He was too young, however, to get into the Navy, and managed to join the Merchant Marine, serving until the end of the war.

In the post-war years, Orlando did many things ; he was successively a wrestler, a "super" with the ballet, a snake-charmer with Lord John Sanger's Circus and an extra in silent films. His first British movie part was in *If Youth But Knew*, which starred Godfrey Tearle, and since that time he has appeared in numerous films, including *Black Libel*, *Tiger Bay*, *Sanders of the River*, *Song of Freedom*, *Jericho*, and *Murder in Soho*. He made his debut as an actor on the legitimate stage at the Criterion Theatre in 1930 in the play *When Blue Hills Laughed*, and afterwards was seen as Bobo Valentine in André van Gyseghem's production of *Stevedore*, in which Paul Robeson played Lonnie. In 1938, Orlando played the role of Boukman in *Toussaint l'Ouverture* at the Westminster, but did not really come into theatrical prominence until he played the leading Scotsboro' boy, Heywood Patterson, in André van Gyseghem's production of John Wexley's fine play *They Shall Not Die*, a dramatisation of one of the great injustices

of American legal history. Afterwards, Herbert Marshall chose him to play the lead in Geoffrey Trease's new play, *Colony*, at Unity Theatre, in which Martins alternated the part with Robert Adams.

During the war, Orlando was for four years engaged in important war work, and was consequently unable to continue his professional career. In 1945, however, he returned to the London stage, playing Blossom in John Patrick's *The Hasty Heart*, produced by Murray Macdonald at the Aldwych Theatre, a performance for which he received a great deal of appreciation, many critics declaring that he almost stole the show without uttering a single word.

He has also recently appeared in three films, *Danny Boy*, *The Man From Morocco* and *Men of Two Worlds*. In *The Man From Morocco*, he gave a fine performance as Jeremiah, the Negro International Brigadier, and it was following his good work in this production that director Thorold Dickinson cast him for his most important film role to date. Magole was a real triumph for Orlando, the culmination of many years of hard work in the theatre and in films. And Martins is deeply grateful to Dickinson for not seeking Negro talent in the U.S.A., preferring to give British coloured actors an opportunity to prove that we have the talent here in this country, if only it is given the chance. As he said: "I am proud and happy to have been connected with the production of a truly magnificent film, which I am sure will do a great deal to sweep away colour prejudice." His newest film is *End of the River*.

Orlando is married and has a son of eighteen, a musician. The African actor has no particular preference for either stage or screen, but likes to play roles which have some character in them, no matter whether they are heroic or villainous. "Rather," he remarks, "have a Negro villain than yet another stupid Negro servant." Martins believes further that talent in any field will break down discrimination by itself. "If you are good enough as an actor," he declares, "you will be given good parts and receive fair treatment." And that is exactly what Orlando Martins has succeeded in doing during his professional career. His motto would seem to be "Merit destroys discrimination," (which however, may hold true in Europe, but, unfortunately, not in the United States.)

Martins is a tall, powerful figure of a man with a deep bass voice, friendly, hospitable, and with a grand sense of humour. He is keenly interested in the foundation of a Negro Theatre in London. As he points out: "If this ever comes into being it will mean not only that Negro talent in every theatre art can be shown to the world, but a continuity of employment for this talent which is now going sadly to waste." Like Robert Adams and the other coloured actors in *Men of Two Worlds*, Orlando is happy to have been given an opportunity in this film, and hopes to do others like it. "It is a courageous venture," he adds, "and I hope that it will go a long way towards showing Africa and her people as they really are to the millions of ignorant unthinking people who regard the African as just a savage. The film shows African and European working side by side in amity and understanding, and that is how it should be."

"HERE'S ANOTHER FINE MESS!"

*A dissertation on Laurel and Hardy—
the ambassadors of the unprivileged*

by Simon Watson Taylor

PERHAPS by nothing can the spirit of an age be so acutely judged as by its sense of humour: humour can in fact provide as penetrating a diagnosis of the unconscious fears and desires of the heart as can an epoch's politicians and theologians of the particular mental delusions and physical aspirations in ascendance at the time. The humour of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Etheredge and Rochester, Sheridan and Wilde allow us an insight into the conflict between man's imagination and society's exigencies which can less acutely be gleaned from the tracts of historians.

Why do we laugh? Perhaps in a large part to *reassure* ourselves; to laugh is to break out for a short time from the restricting barriers of the hard realities of existence—a fleeting defiance of logic's unwholesome hegemony. A sense of the ridiculous and a sense of fantasy are the two great weapons at the command of the imagination in its never-ceasing conflict with the preposterous absurdities of moral *credos* and the laws created by man—created apparently with the aim of keeping himself in a state of permanent frustration!

The ridiculous reassures us in pointing out the pathetic inadequacy of *others'* efforts to harmonize their individual desires with the requirements of society; the instinct of *schadenfreude* is too apparent in us all to demand comment. The fantastic allows us to transcend altogether the "realities" of existence: in that enchanted climate all winds are from the south, the trees are holiday streamers or beckoning hands, and the sky is a velvet skull-cap no less than Agrippa's magnificent pot of ink. And there indeed the rent-collector is no more than a transparent crab scuttling across the sand, the speeches of statesmen are seen to be the vulgar words scribbled on walls by children, and soldiers are so many pine-needles scattered under the evergreens. As André Breton has exclaimed: "The admirable thing about the fantastic is that it is no longer fantastic, there is only the *real*."

That fact is that "reality" as the dictionary conceives it does not by any means circumscribe the whole of our possible mental perceptions of existence: there is also dream, chance, illusion, desire—and the ridiculous, the fantastic. Perhaps these latter are even more valid and certainly they are equally permissible, for ultimately we create our own reality ("man creates God after his own image")—the fantastic *is* real if we decree it so. We have had no accomplices more inspiring in this plot to turn this world upside down than were Swift, Blake and Carroll. Today we cannot do better than allow Charles Chaplin, the Marx

Brothers and Laurel and Hardy to be the sometimes silent, but always lucid spokesmen of our discontent—the ambassadors of the unprivileged.

It is strange (and significant too) that the gracious approval often bestowed by the "intelligentsia" upon Chaplin or upon Groucho, Chico and Harpo should be so manifestly denied to Stanley Laurel and Oliver Hardy, who are perhaps closer than anyone to the heart of our times. . . . We laugh at Chaplin, the master of the ridiculous, and the pleasure of our reactions is hardly disturbed unless we can also distil the drops of tragedy from his magic cob-web ; we laugh at the Marxes, the masters of the fantastic, and still we find it easier and cosier to stand outside in an amused admiration than enter into that strange and wonderful dream which has been their answer to the nightmare of our accepted order of things.

But our laughter at Laurel and Hardy seems strained and unwilling ("Are they *really* funny?") and they are hastily relegated to a very small drawer in the vast sprawling cupboard of our memory. The proof of their genius and our discomfort lies in their ability to draw us into the world of their creation—through the cinema screen and somewhere beyond, into an existence which is the same and yet is not the same as that world we had so wanted to leave outside the cinema's impressive entrance.

For myself, I can say that there is no anticipatory pleasure more keen than that induced by the absurd off-key little melody which heralds each Laurel and Hardy film, followed by the wonderfully dignified and majestically unfunny words of introduction ("Mr. Laurel was in trouble . . . Mr. Hardy was married, too"). And then suddenly the whole agony and marvel of modern times crystallizes before one's eyes : Laurel, now jauntily happy, now paralytically incapable of moving a step or opening his mouth without committing some dreadful indiscretion or inflicting serious injury on himself and others ; Hardy, oozing dignified courtesy, pompous rectitude and native cunning from every pore—only to have his elaborate facade knocked tumbling to the ground at the first contact with the cold, heartless world controlled by prototypes : the muscular toughs, astute business men, shrewish wives and inhuman policeman.

I believe Stanley Laurel to be one of the few really brilliant artists that the screen has brought to light ; the disarming smile and child-like voice, the fatal eagerness to be helpful, the accesses of sheer panic when faced with a crisis, ending either in hopeless tears or wildly futile efforts at extrication, the implicit faith in the value of the least gesture or word of that pillar of enlightened despotism, Mr. Hardy—these are images which flash across the memory as easily and as sharply as do the abject listening heads bowed over the bar-counter at the close of *Strange Incident* ; or the voice of the old and ailing Bernstein in *Citizen Kane*, telling of the young girl in a white dress he had once glimpsed long ago and never forgotten. . . . There is in all these at once an agony and a humour, a quality that excites both pity and revulsion, a disquieting indentification with our own image and an over-powering nostalgia which is hard to reconcile.



Photograph by Ida Kar

SIMON WATSON TAYLOR, actor, poet and surrealist writer, editor of the leading surrealist review, *Free Unions*, who is now engaged on a book about comedy on the screen. The son of painter Felix Watson Taylor, he has recently been touring the Middle East with a theatrical company. A record of his experiences will be published shortly under the title "*Ham, With Care.*"

If Laurel represents the individual in all the latter's hopeless entanglement in the meshes of a hostile society, Hardy is no less the symbol of spontaneous (if vain) defiance in the face of a seemingly ineluctable reality; the brilliantly conceived plans and plots to outwit the ever-threatening oppressors, evolved in a mental child-birth which is patently harrowing and executed with an elephantine agility hampered only by the excessive and misguided zeal of his faithful acolyte, Mr. Laurel—these are painfully reminiscent of those dreams in which our every move and gesture is endowed with perfection, our pronouncements are at the very least momentous and the sequence of events serves only to justify our self-esteem: alas! only to leave us on waking with the at first almost inconceivable realization that there has been, after all, no transmutation, and the liquid gold of the night's dream is still the base metal of waking consciousness—the same elusive grey as the dawn that presses on our waking eyes.

But above the hectic slap-stick of action and reaction, Oliver Hardy retains always an acute sense of the unutterable uselessness of combat. There can be nothing more fatalistic or contemptuous of the logical processes of cause and effect than those marvellous nightmare scenes in which a holocaust of gratuitous destruction is achieved between Hardy and some protagonist, without the slightest attempt being made by either to forestall his fate. Perhaps nothing symbolizes mankind's immense capacity for *acceptance*—underlying all his overt threats and boastings—than the terrifying sequence in an early film of the settling of accounts between Laurel and Hardy (electricians) and the unfriendly grocer across the road. Treacle is poured into the grocer's till, while the owner watches, seemingly fascinated. A lump of lard is carefully projected on to the nose of Mr. Hardy, who remains impassive and immobile, somehow more dignified than ever with his features encased in lard. Mr. Hardy's bowler hat has its crown neatly sliced off by a bacon-cutting machine: Mr. Hardy looks on wistfully, then gazes with a naive astonishment through the gaping hole. He thereupon reaches delicately for a case of eggs and almost kindly pushes his rival into it—as one might offer one's seat to an elderly lady in a crowded train. Here is an unsurpassed *reductio ad absurdum* of the concept of violence, which might have made this extraordinary pair revolutionaries to be reckoned with in some other medium of activity. It may well be an unconscious realization of this absolutely *subversive* element in the world of Laurel and Hardy that is at the root of the discomfort sensed by so many of those superior escapists whose horizon of visual comedy embraces only Chaplin and the Marx Brothers, (one does not even mention those more pathetic escapists who feel they have reached the end of their short journey with the discovery of the Three Stooges or Abbott and Costello).

Ultimately, despair and reproach may be considered as the inevitable and complimentary reactions to life of the individual, hemmed in on all sides as he is. These are indeed, then, the passwords of humanity: "Oh, Olly! I'm frightened" . . . and "Here's *another* nice mess you've got us into."

Youth In The Cinema

by GUY PEARSON

THE Government has recently been pressed in the Commons to hold an enquiry into J. Arthur Rank's Children's Cinema Clubs.

One of the chief critics of the clubs was Mr. Skeffington-Lodge, the Socialist M.P. for Bedford, who expressed concern regarding "the atmosphere of mass hysteria induced by community shrieking—not singing—of theme songs." He also commented on the "general lack of discipline." Mr. Skeffington-Lodge maintained that much of the work of teachers during the week was undone on Saturday mornings, when nearly half a million youngsters were "exploited." Mr. Mack, Socialist M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme, likened the modern child to Donald Duck, "because he was always smashing things and showing his temper." Mr. Mack recalled his boyhood days when he could spend a penny to see the "cowboys and Indians" films, in which in spite of certain crudities, virtue triumphed and villainy was always punished. These films did, at least, contain a certain moral argument, but what of today's movies. Were they suitable for children?

Speaking in defence of the Cinema Clubs, Earl Winterton, Conservative M.P. for Horsham, explained that he was connected with the Odeon circuit and declared that this organisation and that of Gaumont British ran the clubs at a loss. He said that so far the industry had improvised, but there would be improved types of films. It was stated that a suggestion that there should be trained adults to run the clubs would be considered. The Under-Secretary for Home Affairs—Mr. Oliver—agreed that there might be justification for an inquiry, but he said he had *no information that pictures had an adverse effect on the child mind*; a truly remarkable statement from a responsible minister.

It will be seen from the issues raised by both sides of opinion that the Cinema Clubs are not themselves under review as such: it is rather the material they provide and the manner in which it is presented. The clubs have found increasing popularity since their inception and there are many people in favour of their continuance. Before their existence there were, of course, special "early shows" for the youngsters and, like Mr. Mack, I can recall my boyhood days when the Saturday morning ration of "blood and thunder" was a treat that was looked forward to throughout the week. Most of the material was the lusty, "honest to goodness" type—Westerns—thrillers and serial adventures. We had Tom Mix, Douglas Fairbanks, Snr., and our own Henry Edwards. There was no attempt to provide culture or education, it was just plain entertainment with the "triumph of right over wrong" angle supreme and consistent. It served to break the drabness and monotony of the lives of many of the youngsters and often fired within them some sort of the spirit "of which Empires are made." Tom Mix jumping his horse, Tony, off a 200ft. cliff into a raging torrent to rescue the leading lady; Douglas Fairbanks sliding down the sail of a ship from mast-height to deck: these incidents inspired the youth of twenty years ago. Many of the lads who were my companion "fans" of those days grew up to do themselves and their country, great honour in the Second World War. There was no question of "plugging a

moral" in those days, but it was there just the same, and it found a receptive audience.

In the past twenty years both films and child audiences have changed. The modern "Robin Hood" has been taken to extremes. If the leading man is young and dashing and fearless he can "rob the rich" without the additional formality of paying any proceeds to the poor. Impressionable young minds get the idea that crime does sometimes pay and it is a common occurrence now to hear in a juvenile court "that the lad has got some wrong ideas from the pictures." Children have changed in many ways, their outlook is wider and their interests greater, but they are still children and the cinema can still exert a great influence over them. With that influence and the power that it gives, there lies a moral responsibility that must not be overlooked.

Give the children their entertainment by all means, but this is one instance in which a rigid control will be welcomed. Care in the selection of the material and supervision in its presentation must be a paramount consideration. The educational side also must have a thorough "vetting," for the cinema can truly be the gateway to the world for those between who would otherwise not see beyond Hoxton or Hammersmith. More can be taught in pictorial form in ten matinées than ten weeks of text books.

America has already proclaimed that in the field of production of "information shorts" we are far ahead of anyone else. We can produce what these youngsters need. If the Saturday Clubs fill this need than fifty years of films will have been worth their while on that score alone. It is up to Mr. Rank and his producer Mary Field. Will they be successful? Or should we urge Government enquiry into the Clubs, their organisation, programmes and influence?

Donald Chaffey (art director), Michael Barringer (writer), producers Mary Field and Geoffrey Barkas, and director Darrell Catlin, discussing the production programme of J. Arthur Rank's Children's Film Department.

Photo : G.B.I.



SYMPOSIUM ON STROHEIM

BY Oswell Blakeston
John Florquin
and
Peter Noble

"*The Man You Love To Hate*"

by Peter Noble

I grew up with the talking film, so that when I first saw Erich von Stroheim on the screen in *The Great Gabbo*, one of the earliest sound films, he had previously been to me only a Hollywood myth. When I was eleven years old I was eagerly devouring every book on films which I could borrow from the public library; one of the first I remember reading with particular interest was *Cinema* by C. A. Lejeune, which contained a chapter on Stroheim and his work in silent films. Thus when I actually saw him on the screen for the first time I had some knowledge of his fascinating background as actor, writer and director. I found his performance as the mad ventriloquist in *The Great Gabbo* powerful and colourful; later on I eagerly went to each of his films. I saw him with Constance Bennett in *Three Faces East*, with Adolphe Menjou and Laurence Olivier in *Friends and Lovers*, with Richard Dix in *The Lost Squadron* (in which he gave a remarkable study of a brutal film director), and with Greta Garbo in *As You Desire Me*. Then, quite suddenly he stopped making films for the larger Hollywood companies and, for a year or more, disappeared from the screen.

I missed the click of Stroheims heels, the white gloves, the exaggerated mannerisms, the monocle, the clipped square head, the guttural Teutonic drawl, the flashing eyes, the slow, sardonic smile, the twitching sadistic yet sensitive mouth. And, as if to make-up for his absence on the screen, I began to investigate his background, his career in the early days of films, the part he had in the playing of the title role in one of the great myths of screenland. The fabulous Erich von Stroheim, I discovered, was born in Vienna on September 22nd, 1885. He was educated at the Austrian Military Academy and afterwards became a young officer in the Austrian Army. He deserted the army for journalism at the beginning of the present century, and by 1910 had managed

to find his way to the United States where he wrote articles and short stories, and appeared on a vaudeville circuit as the star of one of his own plays. He was co-author of *The Mask*, a successful play, produced in New York in 1913, but he soon deserted Broadway and 1914 found him involved in the mad whirl of making moving pictures. He had also written a play called *Blind Husbands*, which he peddled in Hollywood for some four years, the while acting as assistant director on such films as *Old Heidelberg* and several Mary Pickford pictures (and occasionally playing Prussian officers in a number of silent films.) He acted as military expert for D. W. Griffith on his film *Hearts of the World*, and even made an appearance as a Pharisee in Griffith's *Intolerance*, but when the Great War was over he became inactive for nearly a year, since parts for German officers became few and far between.

By the end of 1918, however, began the historic association of Universal Pictures and Erich von Stroheim. At last he had succeeded in interesting a company in filming his play, (originally titled *The Pinnacle*), and also in letting him direct it. As *Blind Husbands* it was written and directed by Stroheim, who also acted the central part of the Austrian officer, a role he could play with consummate ease, for it meant that he had to act very little. His first film was a *succes d'estime*. As Bardéche and Brasillach, in their "History of Motion Pictures", write: "*Blind Husbands* was stamped with a prudent and not unpleasant brutality; Von Stroheim as the officer-villain created a personality definite enough to make this repugnant character acceptable."

His next film was *The Devil's Passkey*, which he directed, but did not appear in; but it was *Foolish Wives*, the first film to give Universal major status among Hollywood film companies, which did the most to establish Stroheim as a leading film director. He played his usual part in *Foolish Wives*, a satirical study of morals in the German manner which aroused the anger of the censors and the interests of filmgoers all over the world. His fourth film for Universal was *Merry-Go-Round*, which he wrote and directed. Again this was set in pre-war Vienna, a place and period he knew so well. By this time Stroheim was beginning to spend money very freely, and *Merry-Go-Round* marked the beginning of his reputation as the most extravagant director in films. Universal, in fact, were so alarmed by the amount being spent on this film that after a stormy discussion Stroheim abandoned it, and it was afterwards finished by another director, Rupert Julian. By now Stroheim had become feared and admired, and was much sought after in Hollywood where to spend money lavishly was the sign of a great artist. The more contemptuously he treated producers, the more aggressive and arrogant he became, the more he was worshipped, the more he became a myth, the while the film city referred to him as "The Great Von."

Stroheim's most impressive work was *Greed*, made for Goldwyn in 1923. Adapted from a powerful novel by Frank Norris, it proved to be the best of all his films, and is now considered one of the great classics of the cinema. The film took months to make and cost many millions of dollars; the final version ran to twenty-eight reels, which would have taken seven hours to run, but the director would permit no cutting or

changes. Finally, the film was released in eight reels, but Stroheim demanded that his name be removed from *Greed* and declared that he would not be held responsible for the finished production. However, *Greed* did him much credit, presenting, as Herman Weinberg wrote, "a more acid social reality than had ever been achieved before on the American screen." Stroheim regarded his characters in this film with ill-conceived hate and contempt; many of the scenes, especially the wedding, with the funeral passing by outside the window, the treatment of Trina, the miser, and the final terrifying sequence with the two deadly enemies handcuffed together in Death Valley, may be regarded as classic examples of the work of a director about whose personality and ability much controversy has raged since the silent film days.

Two years later, in 1925, Stroheim made *The Merry Widow*, a satire on the old royal family of Vienna. It was an oddly witty and subtle film in its original version, and when released, it made the reputations of John Gilbert and Mae Murray, its two stars. By 1927, the man who made it was remembered as the director of one of the greatest financial failures in motion picture history, *Greed*, which was estimated to have lost a million dollars, and also as the director of three or four "highbrow" films, and one extremely successful commercial comedy, *The Merry Widow*. In the same year came the famous *The Wedding March*, produced by P. A. Powers. Stroheim was persuaded to direct this and also to return to the screen in yet another story of pre-war Vienna. And, once again, he ran riot with somebody else's money; the film was made in two parts, *The Wedding March*, which ran to fourteen reels, and *The Honeymoon* which was a mere ten reels. Stroheim insisted that the parts be presented as a single film with an intermission; the producer refused to do this, however, and only the first part was later released in America. Afterwards the second part was released, but only in Europe. Again the Viennese director announced that, as he had not cut it, he took no responsibility for this version. Nevertheless, the film was one of the most impressive of Stroheim's works, though it proved to be almost his directorial swan-song as far as silent films were concerned. A profound study of the decay of an epoch, it presented a side of "gay Vienna" hitherto unsuspected by film audiences, established Stroheim as an actor, "the man you love to hate," and also made the careers of Fay Wray and Zasu Pitts, (who had given a striking performance as Trina, in *Greed*, four years previously.)

Just before the coming of talking films, Stroheim's stock was at a low level. Due to his arrogance and his extravagance he had made many enemies in Hollywood, and no producers would trust him with a picture; neither would they employ him as an actor. In 1927, he wrote a scenario for John Barrymore, which was later made by Ernst Lubitsch and released as *The Tempest*; then in 1928, he was commissioned to make *Queen Kelly*, from his own original story and starring Gloria Swanson. The film dealt with pre-war Germany, and was sardonic, satirical, revealing an extraordinary brain and a powerful directorial touch, but like *Foolish Wives*, *Greed* and *The Wedding March*, it was unwieldy and ran for several hours. The story of Stroheim's clashes with the producer and star of this film, his colossal extravagance, his difficult manner, his

autocracy; these became part of the Hollywood legend. The film was not finished, since its production was brought to a halt by the advent of the talking film. Stroheim walked out in a rage and the incomplete film was never shown in America due to the director prohibiting its exhibition. Later on the film was seen in France in a special version prepared by Gloria Swanson; (it ran for two hours, representing about one-third of the original picture).

Thus we come to the end of an extraordinary era. Possibly the true story of Stroheim will never be told, except by the great man himself. In 1931, he began to direct his first sound film for Fox, starring his favourite actress, Zasu Pitts. This was called *Walking Down Broadway*, with an original story by Stroheim himself, but the tale of difficulties on the set was continued to such a pitch that Fox stopped production and again Stroheim walked out, this time vowing never to direct another film in Hollywood. He has kept his word. When I first saw him in *The Great Gabbo* he had begun another career, as a star of talking films. However, by the mid-1930's, he was in difficulties. Even as an actor, it was said that Stroheim was awkward to handle, and still behaved in the same way as he had during his fantastic days as a director. In 1934, I managed to track down a little film called *Fugitive Road*, produced by Invincible, in which Stroheim starred with Wera Engels and Leslie Fenton. In 1935, he was starring for Republic in *The Crime of Dr. Crespi*, and the Hollywood wiseacres said he was slipping. It certainly seemed that Stroheim possessed a limited range as an actor and none of the major companies offered him roles of any importance. It is said that he turned down a number of minor parts and busied himself with writing. In 1935, he published a novel called *Paprika* which had a fair success in American and in England. He also collaborated on the story of a film for M.G.M., *The Devil Doll*, and wrote the story of a film, *Between Two Women*, also for M.G.M.

Then another phase followed. For some years Stroheim films had been extremely popular in France, where he was held in high respect both as writer, director and actor. In 1937, Jean Renoir, the French director, was searching for someone to play the role of the pacifist German prison camp commandant in his film *La Grande Illusion*. By a stroke of inspiration, Renoir decided to invite Stroheim to come to France to star in the film with Jean Gabin and Pierre Fresnay. Stroheim was extremely happy to do this, since he felt that it would give his career a new lease of life. He was received with open arms in Paris and in two years he literally did not stop making films for various French companies. These included *Marthe Richard*, *Mademoiselle Docteur*, *L'Alibi*, *L'Affaire Lafarge*, *Derrière la Facade*, *Pièges* and *Gambling Ship*. He made his first British film, *Mademoiselle Doctor* at Worton Hall in 1938, with Dita Parlo, John Loder and Claire Luce, and although other producers offered him roles, he was commissioned to appear in a string of new French films and was obliged to return to Paris.

Came the outbreak of the Second World War and Stroheim had to leave Paris hurriedly and return to Hollywood. Once again, as in the First World War, he became in demand, for roles of Nazi generals and Gestapo agents were becoming frequent between 1940 and 1945. He

(continued on page 36)



Photo : Pathe

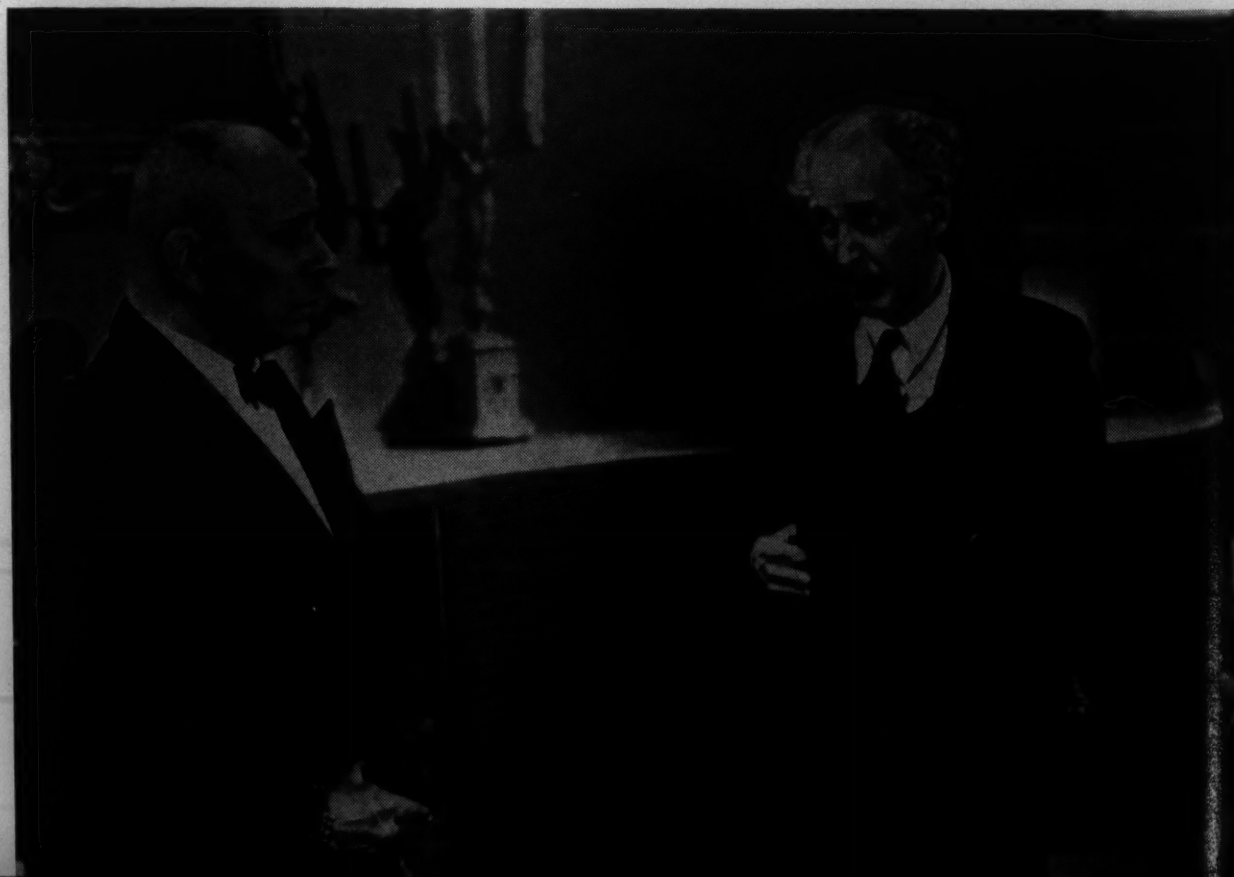
A characteristic pose of **ERICH VON STROHEIM**, seen as the homicidal magician in "The Mask of Diijon," 1945. To this conventional and cheaply-made thriller, Stroheim brought a touch of the original and bizarre. This was the last Hollywood film in which he appeared before coming to Europe.



STROHEIM on the set of "On Ne Meurt Pas Comme Ça," in which he starred and acted as consultant director. This was his first post-war French film after returning from Hollywood last year. Playing opposite him were Anne-Marie Blanc and Denise Vernac.

STROHEIM with **OTTO KRUGER**, in "Storm over Lisbon," one of a series he made for Republic in Hollywood 1944-45. In two of them, the above and "The Lady and the Doctor," he co-starred with the Czech actress, Vera Ralston.

Photo : British Lion



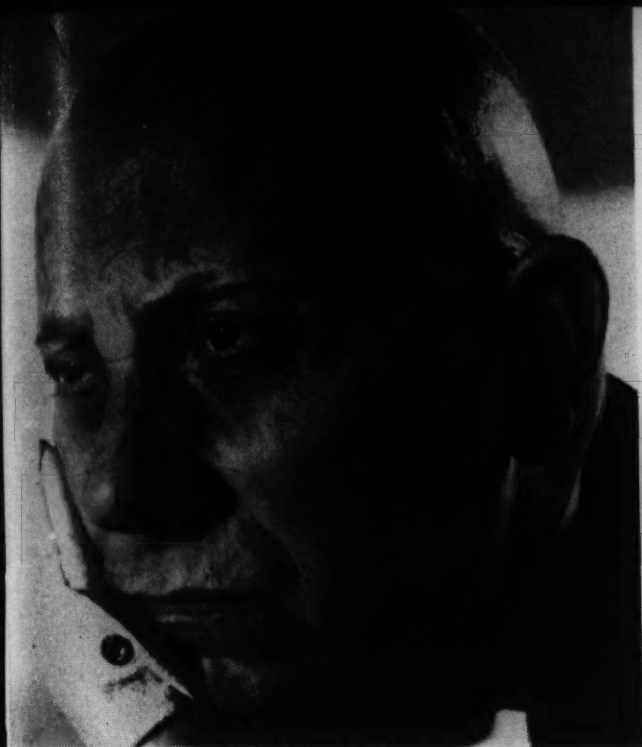


Photo : British Lion

A studio portrait of **ERICH VON STROHEIM** as he likes to see himself, *sauve, debonair, white-gloved, complete with gold bracelet and opera cloak.*

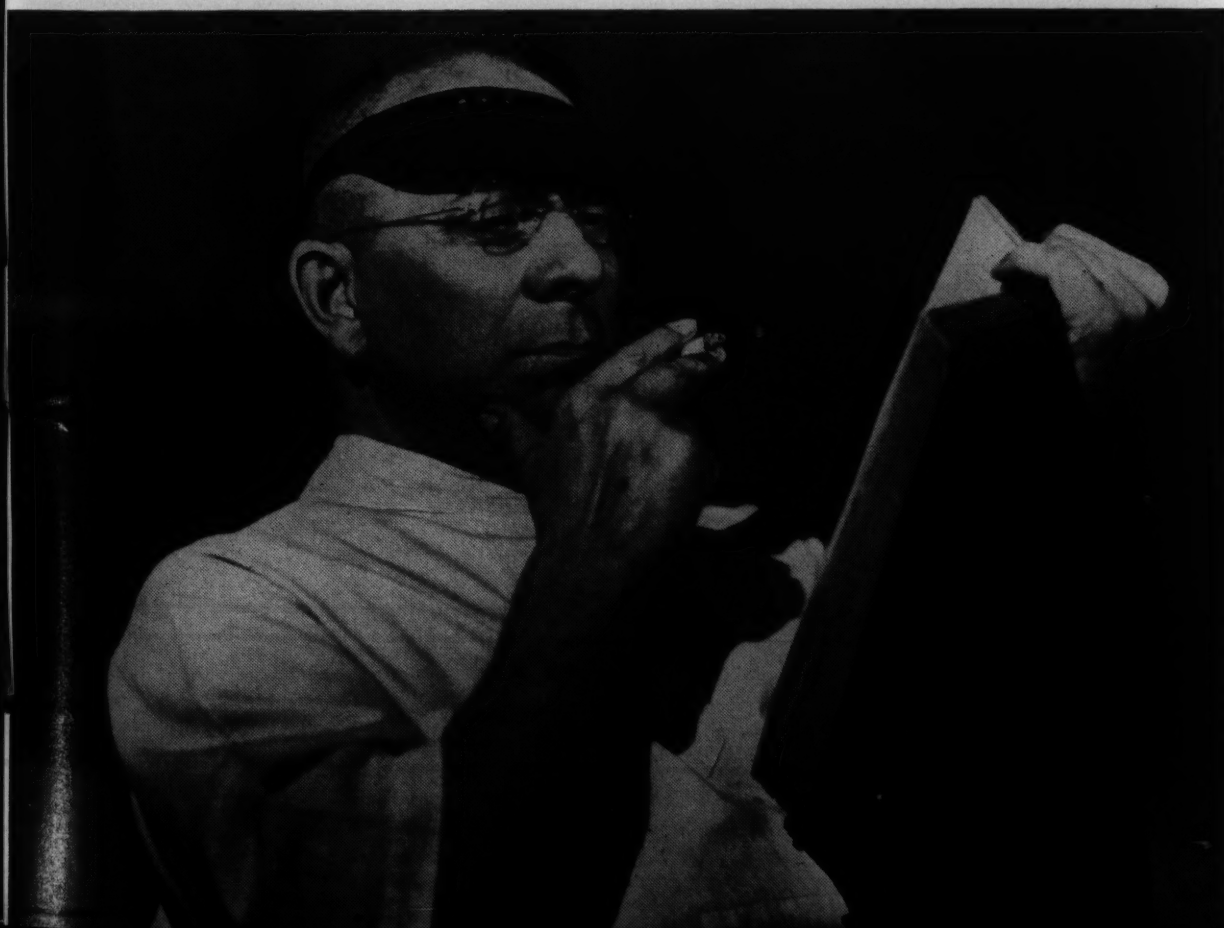


Photo : Paramount

STROHEIM came into his own in Hollywood during the war period, playing Nazi " heavies." Here he is as Marshall Rommel in " Five Graves to Cairo."

For some time Curt Siodmak had tried to get his story " Donovan's Brain " filmed in the U.S.A. No better choice for the fanatical scientist who discovered how to keep a brain alive after the death of its human owner could have been made than **STROHEIM**. He was excellent ; the film finally arrived in Britain under the title of "The Lady and the Doctor," directed by George Sherman.

Photo : British Lion

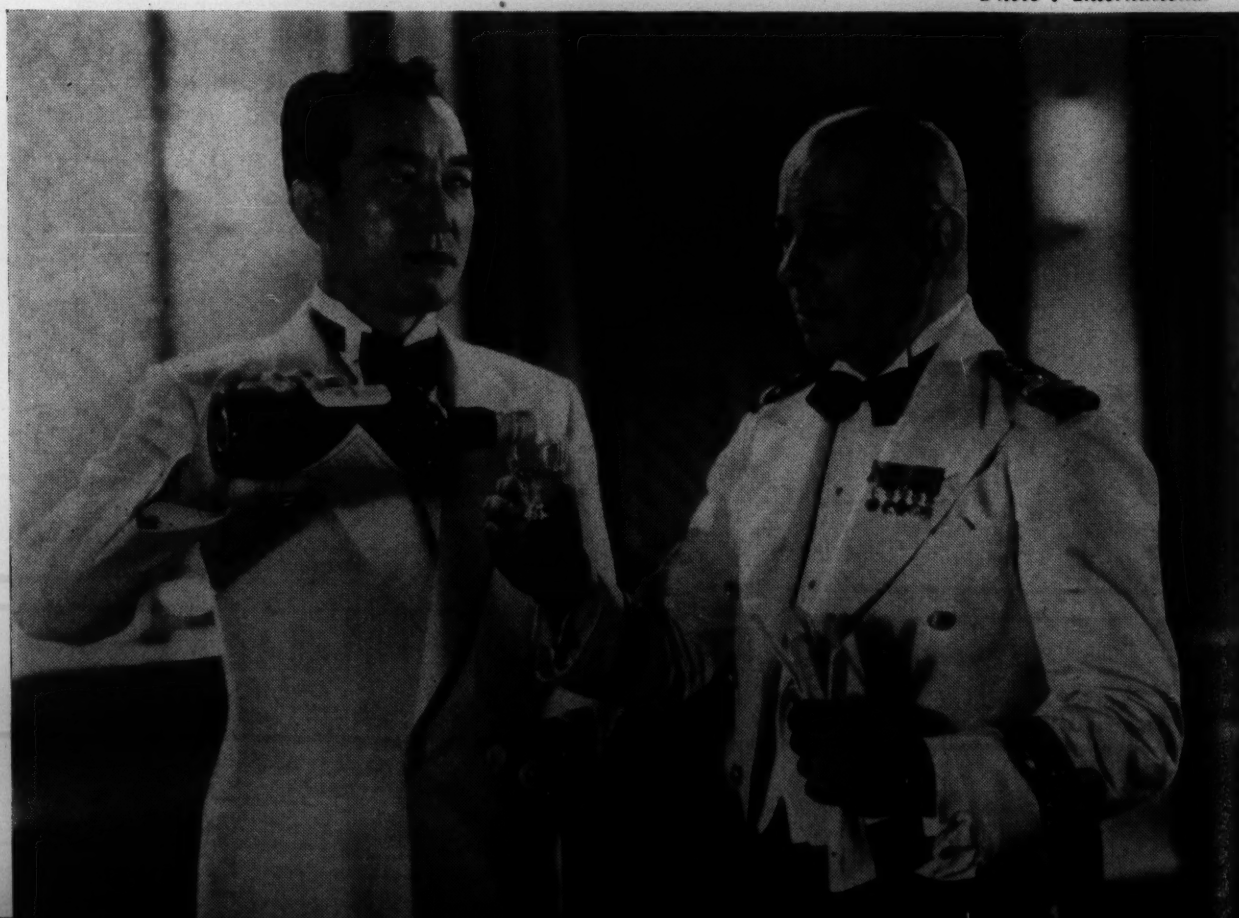


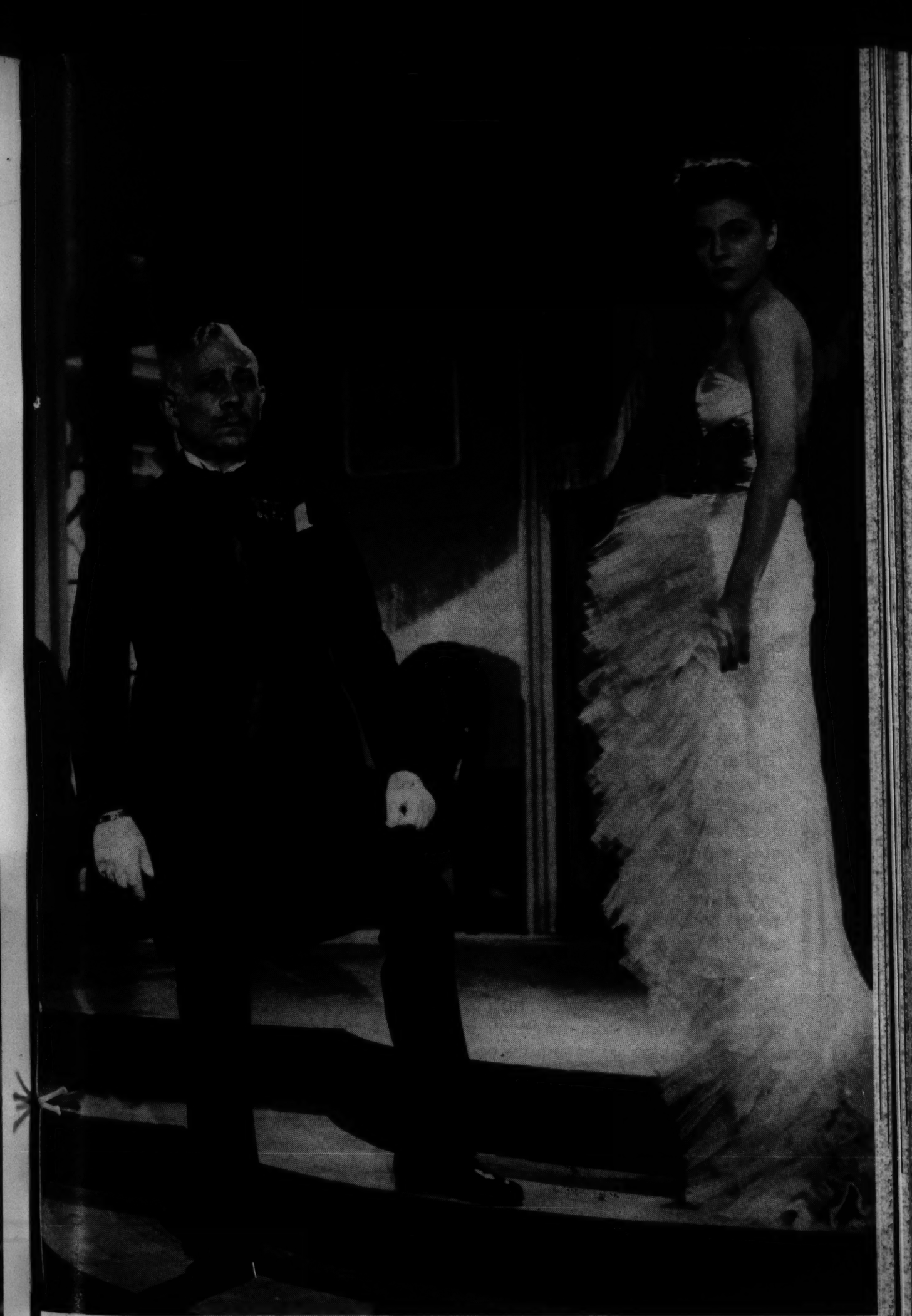


As the disfigured central figure of "La Foire aux Chimères," made in Paris recently, "Von" was obviously completely in his *metier*. The film, however, was not a wide success.

Just before the outbreak of war **STROHEIM** appeared in "L'Enfer du Jeu," but its release was held up until after the Occupation, and it was only recently seen in Britain. With him in the scene above is former Hollywood star **SESSUE HAYAKAWA**. It was recently released in England by International as "Gambling Ship." †

Photo : International





One of **STROHEIM'S** greatest French successes was as the eccentric dress designer in "Pièges," directed in Paris by Robert Siodmak, now a top-ranking Hollywood director. Erich is seen above with **MARIE DEA** in a scene from this his best French film next to "La Grande Illusion."

(continued from page 30)

played his familiar roles in *I Was An Adventuress*, with Vera Zorina for Twentieth Century Fox, *So Ends Our Night*, with Fredric March and Margaret Sullavan for David Loew and Albert Lewin, *Five Graves to Cairo*, in which he played Rommel, for Paramount, and *North Star* in which he gave a horrifying performance as the sadistic Nazi doctor. Stroheim was once more riding a wave of popularity; no actor could play brutal Nazis so well as he, no actor could invest these parts with the touches of subtlety and intellectualism which made Nazi sadism so sickening. However, by 1944, the major companies were not making so many war films, and Stroheim went to one of the smaller Hollywood studios, Republic, where he starred in a series of films, of which only one was interesting. This was *The Lady and the Doctor*, adapted from the story "Donovan's Brain" by Curt Siodmak. Even this fascinating plot was treated in a "thick ear" manner by the director George Sherman and Stroheim was delineated throughout as a kind of twisted monster, (a role, which, however, he was able to play practically with one hand tied behind his back.) The others in the Republic series were *Storm Over Lisbon*, again opposite Vera Ralston, *Scotland Yard Inspector*, in which Stroheim was made to wear a ludicrous white toupée, and *The Great Flamarion*, with Dan Duryea. 1945 found Stroheim starring in a "Poverty Row" production called *The Mask of Dijon*, and when he received offers to return to his beloved Paris he lost no time in packing his bags and sailing to Europe once more.

And so we come to the sixth phase in Stroheim's remarkable career. In Paris he has starred in *On Ne Meurt Pas Comme Ca* and *La Foire aux Chimères*; in the former he was directed by Pierre Chenal and in the latter by Jean Boyer, but it is well-known that Stroheim was at least "associate director," if not complete director of both films. His strong personality and wide knowledge of film-making extending back more than thirty years make him an invaluable addition to the cast of any film, but there are also certain drawbacks in Stroheim's great technical knowledge and wide imagination, for it often means a clash with the director concerned.

Back in 1937-38, Stroheim had planned to direct two films in Paris, *The Crown of Iron*, from a story by Josef Kessel, and *La Dame Blanche* from an original story by Stroheim. The latter was to have been the swan-song of his series of films on Vienna, and the scenario was remarkable for its use of symbolisms. It is unfortunate that neither of these projects reached fruition, for it is likely that in the atmosphere of French film-making he might have given us some of his best directorial work. He is still popular in France, and has a remarkable following both in the United States and Great Britain. Perhaps he may return to London to make some film appearances, for he has received a number of offers to do so. At the moment he is playing a wonderful role in the film of Strindberg's *Dance of Death*, being made in Rome. His future plans are not known, but it is certain that this amazing man is still capable of bringing a fine brain to film production and a great personality to the screen. An intense admirer of his since I first saw him in

The Great Gabbo, I have never missed a Stroheim film, American, British or French, and have even made some historic trips to France in order to view his latest pictures. But this is the type of homage which should be paid to a man whose work and imagination, whose personality and *panache* have brought distinction to films for more than thirty years. This, then, is a tribute to Erich von Stroheim, master of intensification and magnification. Long may he reign!



Stroheim = at the Crossroads ?

by John Florquin

(Our French Correspondent)

IS Erich von Stroheim slipping ?

It is currently rumoured in French film circles that Erich, once one of the really outstanding personalities of the screen, has lost, if not his grip on the masses, at least the unique quality which formerly put him among the 'giants': his sense of values. Credibility is given to this whispering campaign by the marked failure of his last two films, *La Foire aux Chimères* and *On Ne Meurt Pas Comme Ça*, and enhanced by his growing unpopularity with the Press of a country to which he owes the rebirth of his fame as an actor.

It would be useless to hide the fact that von Stroheim's despotism, the hardly disguised dictatorship which he feels compelled to impose upon directors, producers and film-writers, has contributed to a large extent to the very unflattering comments which have lately appeared in French newspapers and magazines. French film circles being what they are—a world alien to any real constructive policy, which often results in appalling conditions as far as productions standards are concerned—temperamental artists get a splendid opportunity for developing a remarkable Hitler or Mussolini complex. The harassed producer,

left short of star material, is only too glad to accept the most extravagant conditions, yes, even to surrender to tyranny, which means, in a few cases, the acceptance of a beloved leading-man or female. Vivianne Romance, for instance, is a typical example: the luscious siren of *Naples au Baiser de Feu* is box-office magnet No. 1, and, at the same time a very shrewd businesswoman. Directing the main course of profits towards her attractive person is one of her characteristics, and such is her position that she nearly always gets a very fat part for her husband in the film she stars in. With von Stroheim, it has lately become a very similar affair: before signing a contract (and even after), he dictates his own laws and decrees. This has been denounced with bitter comments in the Press: it was even hinted that Erich von Stroheim was strangely misusing the prerogatives of ungrudging hospitality.

The only way to silence such criticisms would have been to confront their authors with outstanding work and sound results. But, as said before, neither *La Foire aux Chimères*, handicapped by a far-fetched, incredibly silly story, nor the over-conventional *On Ne Meurt Pas Comme Ca* succeed in putting von Stroheim back in his former position: out of poor material emerges the familiar silhouette of a man whose mannerisms have a tendency to become exasperating. This stylized von Stroheim, with his limited range of expressions, the haughty arrogance of his composure, the heavy and elaborate make-up, the broken French accent, has lost his human appeal, his reality, his common touch. No longer do we sit spell-bound, as was the case a few years ago. It needs a stronger personality than either Pierre Chenal or Jean Boyer, directors of his two recent French films, to bring the familiar programme to good avail. One feels that both directors have "abdicated" in favour of their star,

Nostalgic recollections of von Stroheim's past brilliance, or shall we say genius, emphasize this disappointment. Austrian-born, Erich has contributed in no doubtful way in establishing, firmly, some of the best traditions of realism in American films. Both as an actor and as a director he has done more than pay a contribution to the monument Hollywood has dedicated to the Film Divinity: he has helped in the creation of a grammar on which the Mecca of film-making still builds some of her best products. Never in the early and most brilliant period of his career did his work lack distinction, nor imagination, nor that thrilling quality which one nowadays associates with the name of Lang, Ford, Hitchcock or that master-juggler, Mr. Orson Welles. His skilled work carried a label, for brilliant was the von Stroheim touch, supreme his art and flair for creating suspense, for adding a realistic note to the most conventional scene. He proved a strong liking for satire—for instance, in *The Wedding March*, with some characters looking exactly like gargoyles in a bitterly, mercilessly depicted world—using these dangerous arms with skill and effective irony. Even confronted with the task of producing popular entertainment like the silent version of *The Merry Widow*, his work retained distinction, avoiding cheap standards, gratuity. His personality acted like magic, and many were the fights he put over in a most spectacular way with stars and producers scared out of their wits by his integrity and the

unrelenting quality of his aims and means. Oblivious of disappointment and defeat (which sometimes followed), von Stroheim marched forward, commanding respect.

As an actor, too, he rated high : they made him " the man you would love to hate," but the cheap slogan was only a cover for really impressive acting. Silent films made him, if never a popular actor, at least one of the most outstanding, a character one never fails to notice, however small his part. He quickly mastered the technique of talking pictures, and many among you will probably remember his incursion in Pirandelloism, by way of Garbo's *As You Desire Me*, a suave study in villainy. It is a great pity that Hollywood choose to discard him. He got entangled in freakish ' B ' pictures, and finally set sail for the shores of France, where he was greeted with affectionate admiration.

Offers poured in after the release of his first French film, the not too successful *Marthe Richard*. In this traditional spy melodrama, he nevertheless managed to draw an impressive silhouette of a German commander, complete with monocle, clicking heels and Prussian haughtiness. And from that moment till December, 1939, he wandered from one picture to another. He made some excellent films, others not so good, many of which can be easily dismissed without further references. But impressive remain his performances in Christian Jaque's *Les Disparus de St. Agil*, in Pierre Chenal's *L' Alibi*, in Robert Siodmak's *Pièges*. But he never surpassed, during the French phase of his career, his magnificent acting in Renoir's *La Grande Illusion*. The picture has recently been re-issued—raising a storm of controversial opinions regarding the inopportunity of its theme—and one cannot help drawing a comparison between this powerful von Stroheim, and the artificiality which mars what one dares hardly call his latest achievements.

When Erich von Stroheim returned to France more than a year ago, he was hailed as if he were a prodigal son. His renewed acquaintanceship with Hollywood had added to his commercial value. Producers went to their knees, begging for his services. Papers were proud to announce that ' resisting the lure of American contracts—or should that be, dollars ?—von Stroheim had turned down all American offers, choosing to return to his beloved Paris and French films.' A proud victory indeed : facts prove that, once more von Stroheim's ship had been sailing on dark waters, that he had got completely absorbed by third rate studios and artless films.

What will be this actor's future ? Unless he is ready to accept the lesson of his two last efforts, and consents to put himself into the hands of a film director of real status, he will slip down deeper than before, and consequently have to endure stronger criticism than ever. Already a few papers have mentioned the fact that he used his now familiar tactics on the producer of Strindberg's *La Danse de Mort*, which will present him with a real acting part, a part capable, if only he consents to be ' human,' of putting him right back at the top. With him, of course, is Denise Vernac—promoted to the rank of permanent leading-lady. The film

is being made in Rome—not too surprising a fact since French producers find it more profitable, owing to restrictions prevailing in French studios, to use studio space abroad.

Few are the really outstanding figures in the world of fiction on which the cinema feeds with an insatiable appetite. Von Stroheim, with his brilliant record as actor-director-screenwriter, ought, without delay, to come into a class of his own. Every artist reaches his zenith, some at an early stage, others after countless struggles and hardships; other fail dismally to attain to any result at all. Having displayed an extremely wide range of talents, von Stroheim can no longer pretend to surprise us. But he still possesses the power to thrill us—if he wants to. Arrogance will not foster his career, neither petty ways of behaviour. He has carved for himself a beautiful and richly adorned niche, the ornaments of which would do with some dusting just now. In spite of an unfriendly attitude towards his fans—who bitterly complain because their letters remain unanswered—he keeps a stronghold of his own. He will maintain it, provided he consents to use his brains and heart instead of his whims and obstinacy. Therefore, the eloquently named *Danse de Mort* carries many of our hopes. Will it prove a matter of life or death?



Tribute to Stroheim

by *Oswell Blakeston*

THE cinema has not produced many great men. We have had great film comedians and super film crooners, but never a surplus of really great film men. Those, whom the publicists so often call great, are generally creatures suffering from a "dwarf kind of giantism." But there can be no argument about Erich von Stroheim. He is essentially a man of the film and he is essentially great.

Stroheim himself has been able to make or break the name of film history. Look at the cast lists of the films he directed. There was young Maude George with white hair and Miss Dupont (she had no Christian name) and Dale Fuller (whose mouth covered the screen in the world's most awful shriek) and Zazu Pitts as a tragic actress. Think of *Foolish Wives*, *The Merry Widow*, *Greed*, and think of Stroheim in Paris today. Only a colossus could span such a career.

The greatness of Stroheim the director was that he used his technique as a torchlight. His was the way of saying "Watch this, now watch this." Before Stroheim, people used to bustle about on the screen and the action *happened* but it wasn't *told*. The technique wasn't "Watch."

And Stroheim the director never used his true technique of story telling in pictures simply to express technique. He was big enough to tackle the greatest problem—the control of the mood of the scene. So many people do not think of this problem in relation to the film director. They imagine the director's chief importance lies in supervising moving cameras or inventing bits of business. But the hard task, for the director who wants to tell a story with emotional content in pictures, is the control of the mood of the scene.

It isn't easy to control mood when you are in the middle of everything on the studio floor. So much is happening and so many people are doing it. The temptation is to be "carried away"—by the action, by the cameraman's new theory, by the behaviour of the supers, etc. But in Stroheim-directed pictures everything and everybody is Stroheim.

The flashy tricks of technique, which so unsettle some of the critics ; Stroheim always knew them to be no more than tricks. In a Stroheim-directed film the technique vanishes, and the spectator is left with an experience, the story and the emotion. Such techniques is the disciplined, skilled technique—the work not of the technician, but of the artist.

As for Stroheim the actor, we can rejoice that we still have the torchlight of his personality. Whenever Stroheim is on the screen—we watch !

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the Indian theatre

by CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL

(NOTE : The article on "The Indian Cinema," published in *Film Miscellany* has been received with wide interest. We therefore follow it up with a note on the theatre by CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL, son of film director Adrian Brunel, who was recently in India as a film technician.

THE traveller usually finds so much to interest him in the ordinary life of the countries he visits that he often does not make any special effort to seek out and study the various forms of entertainment enjoyed by his hosts. In any case, the cinema with its powerful influence in showing (usually) the American way of life has become so widespread, that the traveller is quite often tempted to believe that there is very little real indigenous entertainment left, except perhaps in villages and other remote parts.

Even in the no longer mysterious East giant modern cinemas, rivalling those of the West, do a flourishing business in the towns and cities. The attractions of the snake-charmer and the wandering storyteller are being eclipsed, and these ingenious entertainers are rapidly becoming mere reminders of the quaint ideas and customs of the past.

While I do not hold with the dictum that "East is East and West is West, and ne'er the twain shall meet," at the same time I do not believe in trying to force Western habits on peoples who have their own culture, because the culture that springs quite naturally from climatic influence as well as from the history, temperament and occupation of the people is the only one that can have any true meaning.

As is often the case, a compromise between the old and the new is being found by the native film industries of the East. Those fine film producers, the Japanese, base a number of their pictures on the old traditional *Noh* plays; and the Indians, too, who are only just beginning to take film-making seriously, use a large number of classical tales for their screen entertainment.

The root and foundation of Indian film stories lies in the ancient plays, which date back as far as the third century B.C., and much of the acting talent of the Indian peoples comes from their love of *Nataka*, the Indian drama. However, one can hardly say that there is much real show business in India, and there are very few large theatres where plays are performed.

As in the past, travelling bands of players are always at hand to provide amusement in the form of songs, dances, short plays and *Tamashas* (or village operas). These bands consist of actors, dancers, singers and musicians, who learn their art and earn their living the hard way. Traditions are handed down from generation to generation amongst the performers, and the audiences, too, seem to know them just as intimately. In his recent book, "The Discovery of India,"

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru remarks that he was often surprised to find illiterate villagers quoting hundreds of verses by heart from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and other old epics of India, and even these illiterate peasants had a vivid picture gallery in their minds drawn from myth and tradition.

The cinema, on the other hand, is rapidly trying to swallow up the older and more intimate forms of entertainment, and the fact that it has not yet produced anything that is really worthwhile, (except, of course, from the financial angle), only emphasises the fact that the ancient order is in imminent danger of extinction. At the same time, this threat has caused a sort of renaissance of the Indian stage during the past five or six years in the Indian Peoples Theatre Association. This organisation does not exist merely to try and keep alive the old order, but sponsors modern works as well. It can perhaps best be likened to a progressive counter-revolution—if such an apparent contradiction in terms can exist at all.

Their simple slogan, "The Peoples Theatre Stars the People," expresses the aim of this organisation. Their ideas and ideals spring from the rich and varied cultures of Asia, and some of the most experienced professionals work in complete harmony with amateur enthusiasts, who can only devote their leisure-hours to the stage.

I was, in fact, first introduced to the Indian Peoples Theatre Association by a very enthusiastic young lieutenant in the Indian Army. I learned from him that the I.P.T.A. had been formed in Bombay early in 1942, and that now its activities cover the whole of India's vast territories. His zealotry impressed me, and I was at once reminded of the work of Unity Theatre in this country.

As well as keeping the ever-popular Indian classics alive, the I.P.T.A.—like Unity Theatre—specialises in contemporary progressive works. Readers may remember how plays about Spanish life at Unity during the Civil War helped to focus public opinion on the rise of fascism in Spain and assisted in bringing closer together the peoples of Britain and Spain. Only a few months after the I.P.T.A. had been formed, its Committee of Writers issued a powerful manifesto, warning people of the advances of Japanese fascism in Asia and pledging solidarity with the Chinese people in their struggles. When in 1942 the Japanese were advancing towards India, the I.P.T.A., led by Binoy Roy, a Trades Union organiser in the Calcutta jute industry, arranged propaganda performances to combat the predominantly defeatist attitude towards the Japanese invaders.

The activities of Madame Ting Ling, the Chinese novelist, in organising her "Front Line Theatre" in the two neighbouring provinces of Shansi and Shensi in Central China, soon attracted the attention of the Indian Peoples Theatre, and as a consequence many of Madame Ting Ling's works are now familiar to people in India. Her one-act play, "Unexpected Reunion," was translated into English and performed by the I.P.T.A. in 1943, when it proved to be a popular success.

It is strange that an organisation like the I.P.T.A., which aspires to being a National Theatre, should bother with "foreign" plays, but

there seems to be a vital bond of internationalism that makes the progressive modern play universal in its appeal. To give but two examples, I.P.T.A.'s English Group was very successful with J. B. Priestley's "They Came to a City," and last summer Mulk Raj Anand, the famous Indian novelist and short-story writer, adapted Clifford Odets' classic "Waiting for Lefty" and it was produced by him in Bombay. However, Western plays are not entirely new to India, for in 1892 Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" was adapted into the now obsolescent Sanskrit language.

But the real strength and popularity of the Indian Peoples Theatre lies in their purely native productions, and in these it excels. A programme of folk-songs, folk-dances and *Tamashas* is always certain to be popular, and the I.P.T.A. is fortunate in having some of the foremost Indian musicians and dancers connected with it. The most interesting are the two brothers Shanker; Uday Shanker, himself a great and experienced dancer, has been responsible for much of the choreography of the ballets. Ravi Shanker is the musical director of I.P.T.A.'s Central Cultural Troupe—that section of the organisation which specialises in collecting, preserving and performing the many and varied forms of folk culture of all the different provinces of India's vast territories.

This terrific task of keeping alive the classics of Indian culture is aided to a great extent by the current political trends in that part of Asia. There is a strong feeling of nationalism, which rejects Western ideas as being undesirable for a modern India. Western music receives its share of scorn from such men as Ravi Shanker. Himself considered to be one of the finest *sitar* players, he insists on the exclusive use of Indian instruments in I.P.T.A. shows, as well as the exclusive use of classical Indian themes. He believes that the classical *Ragas* provide an inexhaustable supply of musical ideas suited to all possible emotions and to all conditions.

In his work Ravi Shanker has gained a great reputation in his compositions for blending musical movement with the physical motions of the ballet dancers, and in this he has brought great credit to his illustrious brother, Uday, the dancer with whom he has worked and studied for over 12 years.

As a visitor to India, I was not able to appreciate fully the intricacies of their classical music, but the general impression I got from these ballets was wholly and extremely pleasing. The dance would start with a humming sound, slowly rising in pitch and gradually blossoming out with the movements of the dancers. The musicians, who were always clearly visible on the stage, seemed to throw their music like ventriloquists so that it appeared to emanate from the movements of the dancers. This blending demonstrated the skill of Ravi Shanker. The dramatic effect of these remarkable performances was heightened by the intelligent use of stage-lighting, which was also blended in the music.

But so many of I.P.T.A.'s shows are given without any stage at all. In a land where the weather is nothing like so changeable as our own, the ideal setting is in the open air, often without any formal platform

nor even a back-cloth. This is how the villagers of India have been used to seeing their entertainment for centuries, and elaborate settings are found to be quite unnecessary to display the many simple folk-dances that have their origins either in the everyday work of the people or in the delightful mythological tales.

In some of these legendary stories, however, the actors use masks to represent the more weird characters, and the Central Cultural Troupe has collected a fine museum of these masks, during its wanderings over India. Costumes, too, have been collected and copied, so that the Troupe has an authentic wardrobe representative of all the many differing styles seen in the country.

Because some of the costumes are very gaudy and costly, the copies are usually made of brightly painted hessian; but so skilfully is this done, (often by the actors themselves), that at a distance one would never suspect that they were not of the richest and most elaborate embroidery.

Such, briefly, is the scene in the India theatre to-day. With such a wealth of story, poetry, tradition, music, art, colour, interpretive ability and, almost above all, of enthusiasm, there is no doubt that the dramatic arts are destined to play a great part in the India of tomorrow. I only hope that we may soon be privileged to see something of it in Britain in the near future.



Two masked performers in a Folk Dance from Bengal.

Photo : Homi Sethna

"DAY OF WRATH"

Carl Dreyer's great film is reviewed
by JULIA SYMMONDS

IT is very easy for a filmgoer of average adult intelligence and artistic appreciation, wearied by the cliché technique of Hollywood, and to a lessening but still perceptible degree of England, to fall into the equally cliché error of rhapsodising over every film that comes from the Continent in which it seems that if concessions are made to popular taste, prejudice or what-have-you, then either the popular taste, etc., is much more enlightened artistically than in America and Britain, or the concessions a great deal more subtly dealt with. But the other side's argument that we only see the best Continental films as against the good, bad and indifferent of Hollywood and England is not completely valid. Films that are entirely unsuitable, either by reason of excessive parochialism or sheer bad workmanship, for showing outside the United States, are not imported into this country ; and films of English origin which suffer from similar handicaps will be kept off all but a very few screens by the canny sense of the exhibitors themselves. (This gives rise to grim speculations when one considers the abysmal depths of boredom and general incapacity in films which have attained general release ; but that is by the way).

The point is, that judging *Day of Wrath*, (*Vredens Dag*), the Danish film, produced and directed by Carl Dreyer, simply as a film, and forgetting all prejudice in favour or otherwise of the Continental film, it is impossible to speak of it as anything but an almost perfect work of art. In this connection it is interesting to note the significance of the words "produced and directed" by one man. The sense of a single controlling hand, using the camera as a painter uses his brush, is felt throughout the film, unifying, moulding, perfecting the parts into the whole. It is only afterwards that one realises the separate entities of the factors which fuse so completely and so harmoniously together—the straightforward simplicity of the story—(such a proof, if any were needed, that a film as much as a play needs to take heed of at least one of the Aristotlean unities—that of plot which moves step by step and point by point to its inevitable climax—an advantage of plots which advocates of the sermon, atmosphere, and character-sketch type of play and film often forget)—the breath-taking beauty of the photography, the subtle reconstruction of the atmosphere of a past age, the sincerity and power of the acting, the exquisite use of sound and light. The film has faults ; but they are so minor as to be hardly worth mentioning. Yet, though I feel it is unnecessarily carping to complain that the sight of the young wife with her plain puritan cap removed and her hair in a 1940-ish shoulder-length bob which modernised her face at once jarred upon me as it would never have done in, say, *The Wicked Lady*, on a second thought, this feeling of resentment is but another tribute to the quality of a film which recreates the feeling of another century so exactly that so small



"DAY OF WRATH"—*directed by Carl Dreyer*

When the rest of the household are in bed, Anne (**LISBETH MOVIN**) creeps out to join her step-son, Martin (**PREBEN LERDORF**), with whom she is in love,

a pinprick as this can be felt like a sledgehammer blow.

The story of the film is, as beforesaid, simplicity itself—almost hackneyed in one or two of its situations—the elderly husband with the young wife and the grown-up son, the domineering mother-in-law, the relentlessness of a community engaged in hunting down one renegade from the pack. But its treatment, not only in the purely artistic qualities, but in the sympathetic delineation of human motives, is very far from hackneyed. The pastor of a small Danish community in the Seventeenth Century has married as his second wife a young girl whose mother, suspected of being a witch, he has saved from the awful penalties of the witch-hunt because, though believing her guilty, he desires her daughter. On the day on which he expects his son Martin back from a voyage, an old peasant woman is denounced by three of her neighbours as a witch, and comes to the Rectory to seek the help of Anne, the Rector's young wife, who learns from her that her mother had been suspected of witchcraft. In the meantime, Martin, the Rector's son, arrives at the Rectory alone, having missed his father at the quay-side, and meets Anne by herself. In the midst of the family reunion, the witch-hunters arrive, and searching the Rectory, find the old woman, whom Anne has hidden in the loft. She is taken and put to the torture, confesses her guilt, but refuses to denounce anyone else. She demands to speak to the Rector, and threatens, if he does not save her, to denounce Anne's mother, and Anne herself, to the witch-hunters. But he has betrayed his conscience once, and will not do it again, though the old woman believes to the end that he will save her. But he signs the death-warrant, and the wretched woman, having threatened one of her tormentors in the torture-chamber that if she dies he will not long survive her, goes to her doom at the stake, bound like a dummy to a ladder which plunges into the fire at the mournful signal of a bell (a horrifying scene, this), and cursing the Rector who has failed her, and his wife.

With her death, things at the Rectory apparently resume their normal way, but in reality all is not well. Under the eyes of her domineering mother-in-law, who sees plainly what is happening, and of her conscience-stricken husband, who does not, Anne falls in love with and seduces Martin, believing in her credulous mind that her mother's witch's powers have descended to her. In the end, she becomes so obsessed by her love and her faith in her own powers that when Martin shows signs of repenting the wrong he has done his father, she not only wishes her husband dead, but when he returns from giving the Last Sacrament to Laurentius, (the torturer whom the witch had cursed and who now, from some unknown cause, has died) she tells him so, and that she and his own son are lovers. Stricken by the shock, which seems a fulfilment of his superstitious fears, he falls dead, and at his funeral his mother denounces Anne as a witch, and accuses her of conspiring with the Evil One to kill her husband and debauch his son. The film's ending is satisfying in the highest degree, fulfilling all requirements artistic, logical and moral.

These incidents are but the bare bones of a body of great beauty. The pictorial loveliness alone would make this film a gem, if it had no other recommendation. Interiors that might have been painted by Vermeer

or Hooch, faces that seem to have come straight from the canvases of Franz Hals, groupings of heads that would have delighted Rembrandt—the camera has caught them all with the sensitivity of a human being. Indeed, all through one feels the camera as a living thing, and moreover, the chief actor among a group of actors, and not, as is usual, a member of the audience or a compère. It is this quality, I think, which is responsible for the extraordinary feeling of the period. You get no sense that these are stage sets, or modern actors dressed up. You simply feel transported to another age, living among the people who lived then, not, as in so many “period” pieces, regarding them with good-humoured indulgence from the heights of a twentieth-century Olympus. And the economy of means by which this effect is obtained is particularly striking, making a point by means of a single shot and never wasting a foot in over-statement. There is not an unbeautiful or a meaningless or a superfluous shot in the whole film, though there are many that are disressing and horrifying. But the most horrifying are not those of the torture or death of the witch, but the look of curiosity on the face of a choirboy as he peers forward to watch her burning, singing the while in his sweet piercing treble ; the fanatical eagerness on the face of the torturer as he presses the witch for denunciations of other people ; the sudden alteration of the young wife’s beautiful face, as she bends forward to taunt her husband, into a subtle likeness to the face of the old witch. The camera changes its moods like a human—the photography seeming at first thick and misty with the fogs of superstition, the light lingering lovingly on homely things, a cupboard, a spinning-wheel, and embroidery frame, great jars like Ali Baba’s vessels in the loft where the old woman is hidden, the shadows thickening and dulling in the torture-chamber and round the stake and pile. In the outdoor scenes, of a breadth and richness that accentuates by contrast the austere beauty of the panelled rooms and dark plain costumes, the photography is lyrically lovely in its glimpses of a veil of leaves against the sun, the lush foliage of an immense tree in the full pride of its maturity, a line of silver birches like pillars of the Promised-Land—the heart-breaking contrast of the poetry of young love with the sins of faithlessness, cruelty and superstition, of the lovely lavishness of nature with man’s inhumanity to man.

Back and forth the camera moves among these scenes, to a slow, stately ordered rhythm, a pavane of the past when the tempo of life was slower, a dance of death that ends in doom. It is this relentless pulse that dominates the film, moving the characters in flowing lines from one beautiful grouping to another, with here two characters speaking their inimical thoughts back to back, and there two others moving slowly, inevitably, like dancers, to an ordained embrace. The film is, indeed, almost a ballet, with the camera as choreographer, yet there is nothing mannered, self-conscious or obscure, except, indeed, the reason for the strange happenings after the witch’s death. This, though it may seem a fault to those who like their motives spoonfed to them, is simply because the film refuses to take sides. It does not say either “This woman is a witch and that woman an adulteress and they both meet a well-deserved fate,” or “These people are sadistic brutes who delight in torture and mob-rule, and the misfortunes of all of them are due to superstition.”

It shows, what is far more significant, that all the people concerned are normally decent, kindly souls whose actions are quite clearly dictated by their principles.

The pastor is not unhappy because he has condemned one old woman to a brutal death—what grieves him is that, for his reasons, he did not condemn another to the same, and that he has wronged his wife by taking her without love. The torturer and the judges bear no malice towards the old witch—they are concerned with saving her soul and stamping out witchcraft. The rector's stern mother is an upright woman with whom it is possible to sympathise in her distrust of her daughter-in-law, even though it is caused partly by superstitious dread and partly by jealousy. The old woman with her round kindly face and fluffy white hair is a pitiful figure rather than a sinister one, yet it is easy to see how, from her own vanity and a certain violence of temper, the legend of her wizardry has grown among people with a literal belief in a material Devil and hell, bringing her to torture and death. The Day of Judgment comes for them all, but the film leaves it for the audience to choose for themselves whether it is the protagonists' own superstition that brings it, or whether there is really something in witchcraft after all.

It speaks volumes for the harmonious welding of all the film's ingredients, and for the actors themselves, that one thinks of the acting not first, but last, not as the reason for the film's existence, but as one factor in its artistic success. This, I submit, rather than the over-playing of a synthetic personality, is how films ought to be acted. Each of the characterisations, from the old tortured woman and the rector (Anne Svierkier and Thorkil Roose) to the youngest choirboy chanting sweetly and uncaringly the "Dies Irae," is convincing and moving, and none is detestable. But it is the character of the young wife, Anne, and her transformation from saint to siren that much of the interest lies. Lisbeth Movin's representation of the young girl, unlettered, unloving, unawakened, suddenly roused by passion for her stepson and her belief in her own dark powers, is sensitive, moving and subtly-graded, skilfully developed from the repressed girl unaware of her potentialities to the passionate woman, reckless of good or evil and vain of the powers she believes she has inherited. The scenes in which, realising that her husband believes her to have inherited her mother's evil gifts, and already gripped by love for Martin, her unformed childish mind becomes hysterically convinced that she is a witch, and can draw Martin to her by willing it, and can kill her husband by the same means, are handled with great skill, as is her repentance and determination to expiate what she believes to be her crime.

But the acting is only one of the colours on the director's palette, as it were. He uses it, as he uses the close-up, the lighting, the grouping, the unemphasised but telling touches such as the wind that blows upon the rector when Anne wishes him dead, and last, but certainly not least, the sound track—the horrifying screams of the tortured woman, the doom-like notes of the different bells, the background music, the cold clear chanting of the choir—Dreyer uses all these to create a little masterpiece—something that very few films indeed can claim to be, a real work of art.

"Great Expectations"

reviewed by Robert Stannage

ADAPTING the vast, sprawling novels of Charles Dickens to the tightly-knit medium of the ninety-minute movie is, admittedly, no light or easy task. The chief problems are condensation, elimination and casting. Up to now, Dickens and his legion of powerful, rich characters have suffered fairly heavily at the hands of film-makers. There has been no lack of Dickens pictures,—but the pictures, as a whole, have lacked the spirit of Dickens.

They have given us puppets, where Dickens created human beings ; they have been slick and hollow, where Dickens' people had heart and gusto ; and, mainly because many of them were made at least 6,000 miles from the scenes of the novels, they have lacked a sense of reality, in spite of the host of experts, researchers and the rest employed upon them.

Probably the bravest Hollywood attempt to put Dickens on the screen was David O. Selznick's *David Copperfield* (1935), which succeeded in being good entertainment, and managed to achieve, now and then, a degree of conviction as a picturisation of a Charles Dickens novel. But suddenly, along would come a minor character with a badly-disguised American accent, and the illusion of Dicken's London or Dicken's Kent would be lost once more. Two other recent Hollywood attempts, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, were quite good pictures of their kind, but not Dickens ; at least the Dickens

Estella (**VALERIE HOBSON**) tells Pip (**JOHN MILLS**) that she cannot love him in Dickens' "Great Expectations," directed by David Lean.

Photo : Cineguild



that we in England know and love. I tried to regard these films kindly, convinced that one day Dickens and the cinema would be happily married. With Cineguild's *Great Expectations*, the wedding day has at last arrived.

In this film of beauty and realism the book comes to life: that is the highest compliment I can give David Lean, its director, and Ronald Neame and Anthony Havelock-Allan, its producers. Dickens-lovers may argue that they have paid too much attention to the tortuous love-affair between Pip and Estella and too little to the social message of the book; that this was unnecessary and too great a concession to the Almighty Box Office. This criticism is valid, in its way, I suppose, but isn't that rather like pouring scorn on a perfect painting because it depicts St. Paul's Cathedral, instead of St. Peter's, Rome?

Great Expectations succeeds in everything it sets out to achieve. Its makers decided before they began exactly which parts of the novel they wished to retain; then they knit them into a moving, logically-developed film of great technical and dramatic quality. The moments of high drama—the sudden appearance of the convict Magwitch to the frightened young Pip at the marshland graveyard, the discovery by Pip that his benefactor is really Magwitch, the violent death by fire of eccentric twisted Miss Havisham—are tremendously exciting. The minor characters are etched sparingly, with a fine, light touch—for example, the Aged Parent, played by O. B. Clarence, nods on the screen for only a few moments, but in those few moments becomes memorable.

The supporting cast is a strong one—Martita Hunt, as the bitter Miss Havisham; Bernard Miles, as the bluff and kindly blacksmith, Joe Gargery; Finlay Currie, as Magwitch; Francis L. Sullivan, a perfect tower of well-fed lawyer as Jaggers; Alec Guinness, as the vague and likable Herbert Pocket. They are not, it is true, cartoons by "Phiz": they are real people, all beautifully and sensitively acted.

Two talented newcomers, lovely Jean Simmons and Anthony Wager, set a high standard early in the film as Estella (the child) and Pip (the boy), which is maintained by John Mills and Valerie Hobson, as Pip and Estella grown-up. Although Miss Hobson gives an extremely competent performance, I found myself wishing that Jean Simmons had continued in the role. Jean Simmons gives us one Estella, which becomes set indelibly in our minds, while Miss Hobson—who, in any case, bears little facial resemblance to Miss Simmons—presents us with quite a different one.

John Mills brings to Pip his own qualities of restraint and quiet charm. In his early scenes, he shows once again—as he did in *Waterloo Road*—that he is one of the few romantic British actors who can assume a rough, untutored accent with conviction. This is possibly no place to dwell on such things as camera angles and film cutting, except to record that the technical work is first-class throughout. David Lean's sure directing hand achieves an even greater smoothness and coherence than in *Brief Encounter*; and Guy Green's photography is exquisitely lovely. After *Great Expectations*, Ronald Neame, we are told, plans to make *Oliver Twist*. At last, the future for Dickens on celluloid seems bright.

JACK LINDSAY

Reviews Recent Documentaries

●

THE outstanding film of those that come under this review of the term's documentaries is *The Bridge*, directed by Jack Chambers, with script by Arthur Calder Marshall. It deals with reconstruction during the summer of 1945 in Yugoslavia—in a high-up Bosnian village, a market-town with a population half-Moslem, half-Christian. The place has been largely destroyed. On the roads between the Adriatic ports and Belgrade, it is urgently needed for the part it can play in transport ; and an essential bridge, which has been blown up, must be rebuilt at high speed with an almost total lack of materials and skilled labour-power. At the same time the townsfolk themselves have their pressing problems. The children are suffering badly from malnutrition and have to be sent down to the rich plains of Slovenia ; and one of the crises comes when the German prisoners, who are doing construction-work, are given meals while the townsfolk have been foodless for three days. But all the difficulties are overcome.

The bridge is rebuilt with rough-hewn tree-trunks instead of metal piers, and the villagers whom feud and religion had divided are drawn together in the common task. Other men are building the railroad from Belgrade towards the village, and in turn the workers at the village are labouring fiercely to link up with them. We leave them hammering hard in the flares of the darkness, certain of driving through to the needed linking-up. Direction and script-writing are on the same level of clear hard penetration ; and the result is a film full of realising detail and unified movement, with a vigorously controlled sense of exultation in the human power to get together and triumph over obstacles in a common task which gives new values to life. We are convincingly shown how the courageous energies which made the Yugoslav partisans so effective and stubborn a striking force are transformed to the tasks of building a new Yugoslavia. It is such a pity that such a film, which could do so much towards helping us here to understand the new forces fermenting among the peoples of Europe, has not managed to get through on to the circuits. It would certainly be enjoyed.

A number of workmanlike technical films have been made, such as the series made on *Soil Fertility*, *Land Drainage*, *Liming*, and *Soil Nutrients* by Realist for I.C.I. And the Shell Film Unit has turned out (for the Army) an excellent *Approach to Science*, directed by Bill Mason, which is well calculated to bring home in a not too ambitious way the interactions of science and ordinary life. A British Council film, *The New Mine*, deals with the modernised Comrie Colliery in Fife ; but since it makes no effort to relate the facts of this mechanised pit to the general

problems of mining in Britain it can only confuse or irritate. *Your Children and You*, directed by Brian Smith for Realist, shows how tact can deal with a thorny theme, and William Alwyn as usual shows how admirably he knows how to integrate his music with a film.

An elaborate example of how not to do it was provided by *Far Horizons*, the Story of Dunlop at War. The sponsors claim that it is "a new type of documentary film—the first of its kind to be made for an industrial organisation, and combines the quality of a feature story with a background of industry through the war years." The stock-shots of the war, taken from such films as *Desert Victory*, were fine; but the feature-aspect consisted of a painfully snobbish picture of an executive telling his story to a pretty young girl with a notebook. The outbreak-of-war sequence, where the handsome executive, amid the cocktails of an enormously palatial golf-clubhouse, realises how the government is going to need rubber, should be seen to be believed. No effort is made to tell the really exciting story of the developments in the factories: a few perfunctory shots of women standing obediently in front of machines and the like suffice to fill-in before we get back to the handsome executive and the pretty girl, now in W.A.A.F. uniform, meeting her R.A.F. lover. At the last moment the handsome executive remembers to look out of the window and comment on those splendid fellows, the British workmen and the new spirit that made it all possible, (and we have to take his word for it). Space is however found for a Cockney-caricature in a not-so-sly dig at the agitators for the Second Front. A pity; for Dunlops had a good idea in wanting to make this hour-length film about the very important things which went on in their factories. Treated from the level of work and not from the level of executive aloofness, this might easily have succeeded in being "a new type of documentary film."

A pleasant film of life in a Hausa village has been showing at the Academy. Without any fuss we see the work in the maize-fields and the work of wooing and the work of building a new mud-hut for the marrying couple. The Hausa village did seem a much more estimable and desirable place than the golfclub cocktail bar full of pretty grim people.

I do not know if I am in order in slipping in here a few words about Harry Watt's *The Overlanders*, which was reviewed by Peter Noble in our last issue; but the whole spirit and method of this magnificent film owes so much to the documentary approach that I cannot resist saying something about it. Despite some weak acting by a couple of the lesser characters and an end that rather tailed off, the epical quality was sustained on a really grand level. The vastness and depth of the natural scenery did not dwarf the men and women; in their courage and endurance and resourcefulness they showed themselves the equal of the continent that they set themselves to master. As one who grew up in Queensland, I can testify to the perfect truthfulness of this film in rendering Australian life and character. Watt has done more than bring Australian space into the film-world; he has brought the British documentary method at last into a genuine epical theme, and the result is tremendous.

"Les Enfants du Paradis"

● An outstanding filmic achievement reviewed by
HUGH BARTY-KING ●

I am not one of those who prefer films to be about the folk who live next door. The people in *Les Enfants du Paradis* are far removed from the mundane—in time, place and world. They do what they do in 1850, in France and in that enviable, delightful world of the theatre which would seem to exist behind a gauze curtain—anyway then, and anyway in France.

One sits watching these people for three hours fascinated by their three-fold remoteness, by their happy irresponsibility and detachment, by their unconcern for *les petite evènements* which Avril, putting her head through the gauze for a moment, tells Garance (on the point of making another exit) are what make life difficult. Life for them is one big purple patch. Not for them to weigh the consequences; the dramatic exit, the saving curtain, will always see them out.

Marcel Carné, director of *Quai des Brumes*, *Hotel du Nord* and *Le Jour Se Lève*, has made this exotic, devil-may-care, full-blooded atmosphere live as no other 'costume' film has ever lived before. (The script is by Jaques Prevert, who has collaborated with Carné on a number of successful films.) He has framed the whole piece within drop curtains—a well-conceived trick. Life is sliced open at any old time (apparently), any old where (we are led to believe). There they all are, laughing, plotting, dancing, acting, kissing, shouting. And it's all years ago, and in France, and they're all dressed up.

Out of the *melée* we are asked to concentrate on a selected few, but mainly on the lovers. The would-be dramatic actor accosts the girl in the Boulevard des Crimes, learns her name, is told the world is small for those who love like they do and passes to another. Later on, outside the Théâtre des Funambules, the simple one with the floured face sees it wasn't the girl who stole the watch, and with a piece of mime that rocks the audience and shakes the policeman's confidence, succeeds in winning the girl.

Then in and out of one another's lives they go, the players in this tragic-comedy—the Dramatic Actor gate-crashes the Funambules, the Mime rescues the Girl from the Thief, the Girl plays the Statue, attracts the Count, annoys the Mime, and trumps with the Count's card in a spot of bother. Down comes the Curtain and life is sliced once more. To rise again—"Several years later."

And if ever the people who have been singled out for our attention show signs of failing to cross each other's paths, old Jéricho, the ragman and nark, will hobble into the picture and, with a whispered tip, link them up once more. The part of mistress to the Count (though she remains faithful to the Mime's memory), suits the Girl—but not the Thief, who loves the girl and hates her aristocratic protector. The now famous Dramatic Actor's first night as Othello is the occasion for them all to reassemble. The Thief, in a well-timed gesture of revenge, first shows the Count the Lovers reunited on the theatre terrace, and



PIERRE BRASSEUR, as the flamboyant actor Frederick Lemaitre, and **ARLETTY** as Garance in Marcel Carné's masterpiece "Les Enfants du Paradis," produced in France during the Occupation under immense difficulties. The cast includes Jean-Louis Barrault, Pierre Renoir and Marcel Herrand.

next day kills him in his Turkish Bath. And the Mime, forsaking his Avril, re-discovering the Girl, seeks her in the jostling carnival of Paris and engulfed as in a nightmare in the prancing dancing mob, he is cut off by the curtain, which descends on him, surely and steadily, guillotining him off from Life, as the lights of the cinema go up and we are back in 1947 and England and *les petits évènements*.

All the characters in Carné's memorable film actually existed in Parisian history. There really was a famous mime called Baptiste who fell in love with a dark beauty called Garance; and a dramatic actor called Frédéric Lemaitre was actually the first French Othello. And Jean-Louis Barrault (Baptiste), Arletty (Garance) and Pierre Brasseur (Lemaitre) have made these amiable people live again. The minor characters we have come to expect in French films, each so neatly and fully sketched, are there in abundance—Jeanne Marken's Madame Hermine, Gaston Modot's Blind Man, Pierre Renoir's Jéricho, the Mime's father, his faithful sweetheart, the detective—the list is long and each cameo satisfies like old wine.

Marcel Carné has given us some memorable pictures—the early morning duel scene, the crowds in the ' gods ', (*les enfants du Paradis*) clamouring for Baptiste in the little theatre, the jogging dancers in the back-street café where Baptiste rescues Garance from Lacenaire the Thief (beautifully played by Marcel Herrand), the final carnival, the

truly remarkable mime scenes. There is comedy like Lemaitre's ridiculing the trio of outraged authors—a delightful sequence—and there is much charm and real beauty in a production which is a triumph for Carné and for France.

The film was made under considerable difficulty, and the result should surprise those English producers who now complain of lack of studio space and adequate facilities. *Les Enfants du Paradis* commenced production during the Occupation. The sets had to be constructed at the Joinville Studios outside Paris and often there was not sufficient petrol to take the players and technical staff backwards and forwards. Material for costumes was lacking, so was scenery, and even nails to make the sets. But Carné carried on.

When the company moved to Nice for studio sequences many of the actors were reluctant to leave Paris, afraid it would be cut off, like Rome, from the rest of the country. They preferred to remain behind with their families. In any case many of the cast belonged to the Maquis with jobs in Paris. But Carné would not give up. The film was finished in 14 months shortly after the Liberation of France. Do you read an allegory in the tale of these people in long-ago Paris? Some do; I prefer to regard it merely as a superb piece of film-craft. The success of this film—the crowds which queue in the rain daily outside the Rialto—should indeed shame our own directors. Made under sometimes intolerable conditions, under the eyes of the Nazis, with constant interference, it still remains the most charming film that France has yet given us.

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SOME RECENT FILMS

Reviewed by Peter Noble

IT cannot be said that 1947 has had an auspicious beginning as far as new films are concerned; it is much more pleasurable to dwell on 1946, which, for British films in particular, ended in a blaze of glory. One remembers the witty *School for Secrets*, written and directed by Peter Ustinov, which with a superb performance by Ralph Richardson aided by a script neat and intelligent, was a picture to be considered among the best of the year. It was David Lean's *Great Expectations*, however, which provided the critics with the most aesthetic pleasure of all the films witnessed during the New Year. This was great cinema. The acting of John Mills, Anthony Wager, Jean Simmons, Francis L. Sullivan, Martita Hunt, Alec Guinness and a host of others was uniformly excellent, the photography by Guy Green was visual poetry, the imaginative sweep of David Lean's direction provided a lesson to all film-makers. In all, *Great Expectations* was the finest film of the year, and one of the finest films ever made. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger contributed *A Matter of Life and Death*, a highly interesting essay into the astral sphere, which did not quite come off, in spite of highly ingenious camera-work and the impeccable acting of David Niven, Marius Goring and Roger Livesey. This film opened the first Royal Command Film Performance in London last November and had a mixed reception; in the U.S.A. it has apparently been acclaimed as one of the best British films ever made, ranking third in the New York film critics list of the best films of the year. This demonstrates more than ever that Hollywood is at low ebb; other British films like *Brief Encounter* also appeared on the same list, ousting the year's best from California.

The two best from Hollywood in the closing months of 1946 were both films directed by Robert Siodmak, *The Killers*, from a story by Ernest Hemingway, and *The Dark Mirror*, in which Olivia de Havilland emulated Bette Davis in *A Stolen Life* and played twin sisters. Both films revealed pleasing directorial touches by Siodmak whose *The Spiral Staircase* was easily the best American film of 1946.

An outstanding contribution from Denmark was Carl Dreyer's *Day of Wrath*, a sombre and lovely story of seventeenth century Denmark, which showed that Dreyer still possessed the genius for which he was acclaimed many years ago with his direction of *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Hollywood was represented in December by *The Razor's Edge*, a long, expensively-mounted version of Somerset Maugham's novel, which was curiously unsatisfying. Anne Baxter as the drunken Sophie and Clifton Webb as the snobbish Elliot Templeton achieved the only acting successes in a film which obviously meant well, but which had a stodgy, sermonising quality. Its philosophy was shallow, and the actions



Photo : Eagle-Lion

The schoolmaster at the Reformatory (NOEL-NOEL), draws one of his pupils on the blackboard. A scene from "*La Cage aux Rossignols*," directed by Jean Dreville.

of the young man, played by Tyrone Power, were both tiresome and illogical. A much better film in every way was *The Lady In The Lake*, directed by Robert Montgomery from the story by Raymond Chandler. This goes on my list as the second best Hollywood film of the year; the technique employed was a variation of Dziga Vertov's Camera Eye. Director Montgomery appeared in the film as the narrator, but was rarely seen since the film was viewed by the audience as through his eyes, a novel experience, but one whose application appears limited. Nevertheless, *The Lady In The Lake* was fast-moving, often witty, containing much crisp Chandler dialogue and was extremely well-acted by Montgomery, Audrey Totter, and Jayne Meadows. In a black year as far as Hollywood was concerned, *The Spiral Staircase* and *The Lady In The Lake* were the only redeeming features.

Since the end of hostilities in Europe there has been a steady trickle of French films finding their way into London. Among a recent batch three stand out. The first is *La Cage aux Rossignols*, a touching little story about a new teacher at a boys' reformatory, delicately acted by Noel-Noel and a group of child actors whose performances would shame their elders. The film is frankly sentimental, but not in the heavy American way, as exemplified by such monstrosities as *Gallant Bess*; it is a modest little film which is entertaining and, in an odd way, uplifting. The second French film is Marcel Carné's *Les Enfants du*



Photo : Selznick

JENNIFER JONES and **JOSEPH COTTEN** in "Duel In The Sun," produced by David Selznick and directed by King Vidor, 1947.

Paradis, a magnificent document of the Paris of a hundred years ago, sensitively acted by Jean Louis Barrault, Arletty, Pierre Brasseur and Marcel Herrand. This is a masterpiece, which will rank among the best films in the history of the cinema. The third is no masterpiece, but is a completely satisfying motion picture which could only have been made by the French with any success. It is *La Symphonie Pastorale*, the story of a blind girl, who, when her sight is restored, commits suicide as she realises that unwittingly she has destroyed the happiness of a family. The pastor, who discovers the little blind girl, brings her up as his own child and falls in love with her, is superbly acted by Pierre Blanchard, but it is the work of Michele Morgan which has received the greatest praise. For her acting in this film she received the first prize at the Cannes Film Festival for the best performance of all the films submitted, and this certainly is a pathetic and memorable piece of acting. The French, like the English, have inaugurated a new school of film-making. In the past ten years the cinema as an art form has developed only on this side of the Atlantic; Hollywood seems to be bereft of new ideas, chained unhappily to the box office. It will be interesting to see how American films develop in the post-war period.

(As an admonitory foot-note, however, it is well to remind British filmmakers that productions like *Meet Me At Dawn* and *Hungry Hill* are not likely to enhance our reputation either at home or abroad; the former was badly directed, badly written and badly acted, the latter was slow, dull and repetitious, redeemed only by a fine performance from Dennis Price, a British actor to watch.)



Photo : Individual

"CAPTAIN BOYCOTT"

STEWART GRANGER in a scene from the new Individual production, directed by Frank Launder from a story by Philip Rooney. Others in the cast are Kathleen Ryan, Cecil Parker and Mervyn Johns.

THE SOVIET CINEMA IN 1947

by a Special Correspondent

MIKHAIL Kalatozov, Assistant Minister of Cinematography of the U.S.S.R., was asked by the correspondent of "Film Survey" to say something about the forthcoming plans of Soviet cinema. M. Kalatozov, 41 years old, has had many years of experience in Soviet cinema. His career as a director was begun with the silent film "Salt of Svanetia" in which he displayed great mastery. Subsequently directing a number of other films of the Tbilisi Studios, he was finally appointed to direct that institution. Later, he produced the film "Chkalov," about the great flyer Valery Chkalov who made the famous non-stop flight from Moscow to the United States. During the siege of Leningrad, Kalatozov together with that other well-known film director Sergei Gerasimov produced the film "Invincibles," about the heroic struggle of the people of Leningrad against the Nazi barbarians. He then spent two years in the United States as representative of the Cinematography Committee of the U.S.S.R. When he returned to the U.S.S.R. he was appointed to head the Film Production Administrative Board and now holds the post of Assistant Minister of Cinematography of the U.S.S.R. on questions of film production.

"Soviet Cinematography was faced with a great task after the war," said M. Katalozov, "the task of restoring the studios damaged by the Nazis in the occupied zones. Major repairs were required for the Lenfilm Studios shelled by the Nazis during the siege of Leningrad. The Mosfilm studios, returned from evacuation, had to resume operations. Regardless of this our studios have produced a number of successful films since the end of the war. Dealing with contemporary themes, the exploits of the Soviet people and their will for victory, these films have unquestionably enriched our cinema art. I am referring to such films as *The Oath*, *The Turning Point*, *Invasion*, *Man No. 217*, *The Invincibles*, and *Zoya*.

"At the same time we turned out a number of mediocre and poor films also. Our mistakes were drawn to our attention by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and severe criticism of their work compelled a number of film directors and playwrights to give serious thought to the reasons for their shortcomings.

"Soviet cinema art," emphasized M. Kalatozov, "can have no interests other than those of the people and the country at large. The cinema in the Soviet land serves as a means of educating the people, particularly the youth, in the spirit of love of country, readiness for struggle to surmount all obstacles. Our cinema studios produce films

reflecting the nobility of the Soviet people, the progressiveness of the Soviet economic and political system, the might and grandeur of the Soviet state."

"How have the plans of Soviet cinematography been arranged in connection with these tasks?"

"Before the New Year we will turn out eight more feature films dealing with the history of our country, the heroism of the Soviet people at the front and their efforts in the hinterland during the war. The titles are *Song of the Varyag*, *Glinka*, *In the Name of Life*, *Our Heart*, *The First Glove*, *Centre of the Attack*, *Rossi Street* and the first full length stereoscopic film *Robinson Crusoe*. Next year's plan provides for the production of three full length films to form part of the artistic chronicle of the Second World War. The first of these, *The Defence of Leningrad*, will be directed by Sergei Vasiliev who directed the film *Chapayev*, the second, *Battle of Stalingrad*, will be directed by Vladimir Petrov and the third, *Liberation of the Crimea*, by Igor Savchenko. In all three, cinema artistry will be blended with the truth, supported by documentary date. In addition to the collective heroes, the brave soldiers and officers of the Soviet Army, the spectators will see portraits of the famous Stalin army leaders.

The struggle of the Soviet people and their deathless exploits will form the subjects of the feature films *Young Guards*, based on Alexander Fadeyev's novel of that title. *Alexander Matrosov*, based on the scenario of Georgi Mdivani and the film director Leonid Lukov, will tell the story of a young soldier posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Private Matrosov blocked the embrasure of an enemy pillbox with his body and perished, but his company moved on and seized hitherto inaccessible enemy positions. The final phase of the war and the capture of Berlin by the Soviet Army will be described by the film to be produced by the writer Peter Pavlenko and the film director Mikhail Chiaureli, the author of the film *The Oath*. The three films *The Way Home*, based on the play of the Latvian writer V. Latsis, *Citadel*, on the scenario by L. Trauberg, and *Maria Melnikaite*, on the scenario of F. Knorre, will show the part played by the Soviet Baltics Latvia, Esthonia and Lithuania, in the struggle against their traditional enemies, the German invaders."

"How about films on the restoration and development of the national economy in the current Five-Year Plan?"

"That, in fact, is a very important part of our programme. In his film, *Tale of Siberia*, the director Ivan Pyriev will show how the Stalin Five-Year Plans transformed Siberia, how Siberia acquired many large industrial enterprises which supplied the country with everything necessary during the war. He will also show the continued construction in this section of Russia in peacetime. Several of our new films will show our collective farmers at work, will tell about the innovators in the factories, the oil fields, the metallurgical plants and on the cotton fields of Uzbekistan. The playwright Nikolai Pogodin who has already written a number of plays about the first Five-Year Plans is now writing the scenario for *Poem of the Five-Year Plan*, to be directed by Alexander Ptushko, who will try to show something of the creative efforts of the

Soviet people. *City in the Desert*, scenario by Vs. Ivanov, will show how a huge copper smelting plant which supplied the front with essential non-ferrous metal during the war, sprang up on the barren shores of Balkhash Lake in Kazakhstan.

The lives of Soviet scientists devoting all knowledge and talent to their country will be the subjects of the films *Cottage in Koltushakh*, about the life and work of the great physiologist Ivan Pavlov, *Human Forces*, about the eminent metallurgist and statesman, Academician Ivan Bardin, *Formidable Armaments*, about the Soviet designer Boris Shiptalny, *Life in Flower*, about A. Dovzhenko and so on. The struggle of the people's avengers, the partisans, against the invaders will be described by the films *People with a Clear Conscience*, the scenario by Hero of the Soviet Union Peter Vershigora and *Avengers* by L. Linkov and K. Krapiva.

"I have mentioned only the principal films to be produced in 1947. More than 80 authors and playwrights are collaborating on various scenarios with the film directors of our two largest studios, Mosfilm and Lenfilm. Many new scenarios too are being prepared by the scenario studio of the Ministry of Cinematography.

"One of our most important tasks is the training of new film directors. For this purpose we have set up five special studios under the auspices of some of our best film directors who have already had a good deal of experience in working with the young newcomers. S. Gerasimov, G. Kozintsev, I. Pyriev, Yu. Raisman and S. Yutkevich will guide the work of a number of films to be directed by the young people.

"There is plenty of work ahead in the reconstructing and re-equipping of our studios. A lot of work is now being done on the project of the new Mosfilm studios which will produce at least 40 films annually.

"Our new tasks are great and very responsible," concluded M. Kalatozov, "but I am certain that the Soviet cinema workers who have turned out many a good film during the war, films about the mobilization of the Soviet people for the struggle against the enemy, will continue in the same spirit in peacetime, will forcefully depict the creative endeavour of the Soviet Union at peace. A guarantee of this lies in the friendly collaboration between our personnels and their love of country, in the solicitude of the government whose wise instruction and advice will stimulate the further development of cinema art in the Soviet Union.

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film bookshelf

by OSWALD FREDERICK

AN excellent series of film publications now firmly established with the cinema-going public are those two shilling novelizations of current popular screen plays, bearing on their covers, the caption, "The Book of the Film." They do not set out to be great literature, but they are readable and graphic adaptations from the film script, with not the least commendable feature of them being their faithfulness to the originals. All the titles aren't everybody's cup of tea, of course, but then neither were the films when they were released; World Film Publications have done a very good job in issuing a wide variety of these books, from *The Seventh Veil* to *A Night in Casablanca*.

The latest two booklets to hand are versions of "THE STRANGER" and "MEN OF TWO WORLDS," adapted by Anthony Veiller and Ethel Fisher respectively. The narratives are up to the usual standard, and the choice of stills from the films are excellent.

A very interesting publication dealing with the complex subject of films and actors, is "AMERICA AT THE MOVIES," by Margaret Farrand Thorp, (Faber, 12/6). This book, which might be termed a sociological survey of the picturegoer in the United States, is an immensely thorough and informative work, and touches upon almost every aspect of the industry in its relation to the public. Although it has just been published in this country, Miss Thorp wrote it in 1939, at the outbreak of war, and the editors, H. L. Beale and J. P. Mayer, remark that this seemed an appropriate time to start a sociological inquiry into the movies, with the war marking a turning point in civilization's history.

America at the Movies, therefore, while comprehensive up to a point, says nothing about the war and post-war productions from Hollywood, and neither is it able to deal with the many changes which have overtaken the industry, both in subject matter of films and the arrival on the scene of new and younger actors and actresses.

For all this, the author has given us a book about pictures, picture people and the people who go to the pictures which is totally different from anything ever done previously. Such a work was badly needed for as she says, there is, apparently, not a phase of American life which the movies do not somewhere touch. With our home industry rapidly rivalling that of the United States, and considering the vast influence Hollywood has had in the past twenty to thirty years on the British way of life and thinking, this book is as vitally important for us to read as it is for those across the Atlantic.

It will not, of course, reach all those people about whom to a large extent, it is written, the average cinema-going members of the community who confine their reading to the fan magazines. But if Ted Jones or

Lucy Smith come across *America at the Movies* in the "non-fiction" section of their public library, the title might induce them to borrow it. If this happens, perhaps they will even read it, or at least, the two chapters with the titles, "What Movie Tonight?" and "Cinema Fashions." Both sections will be something of an eye-opener for them.

There are forty-six illustrations, ranging from stills of films and portraits of stars to a specimen greeting card sent by Ilona Massey to her fans at Easter! The production of the book is of the usual high Faber standard, with exceptionally fine binding. No serious student of the cinema can afford to be without it.

J P. Mayer, co-editor of the English edition of Miss Thorp's book, follows *America at the Movies* with a sociological work on the cinema of his own, entitled *SOCIOLOGY OF FILM*, (Faber, 15/-). Similar in subject, but widely different in content, it concentrates upon the British filmgoer and his attitude to the cinema. An introduction to J. Arthur Rank and his subsequent help in facilitating the author in his studies enabled Mr. Mayer to gain an insight into the mental processes of the average British film fan. His chapter, *The Adult and the Cinema*, is a most enlightening section. It contains sixty-eight documents from a cross-section of the British public who, in 1945, responded to an offer in the fan magazine *The Picturegoer* to answer two questions regarding the influence of films on the reader. These documents range from the puerile to the highly intelligent. (The names, together with any clue to the identities, of these filmgoers, are withheld, of course, in order to save the writers embarrassment.)

In publishing these documents, Mr. Mayer is doing us a great service. They bring home to us, far more strongly than any other way, how films have influenced the weaker-minded young cinemagoers during the 'twenties and 'thirties. Millions are now living by a set of false Hollywood values and the author, in his conclusion and postulates, offers several reforms regarding censorship, distribution and the classification of 'A' and 'U' films. *Sociology of Film*, together with *America at the Movies*, should be read by every student of our present-day civilization.

Roy Fowler, whose excellent biography of Orson Welles appeared last year, has now written a welcome book, *THE FILM IN FRANCE*, (Pendulum Publications 2/-). Mr. Fowler, who has made a detailed study of the cinema industry in France, has packed a wealth of information into this little book and has managed to include stills from recent and not so recent French productions, many of which have not been seen yet in England. He also appends a useful list of the films made by the outstanding French directors between the years 1940 and 1946.

Two of the films most adequately dealt with are *Les Enfants du Paradis* and *La Symphonie Pastorale*, both of which are now attracting large audiences to their first London showings. At long last, it would seem, the better French films are finding the vast public in this country they deserve. Roy Fowler's introduction to this nation's film industry is therefore highly topical, and his, the first book ever published in this country on French films, is a work which will be readily appreciated by those who are now queuing at the Rialto and the Curzon.

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